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THE

TEXAN SCOUT,

OR,

THE JAROCHO'S SISTER.

BY HARRY HAZARD.

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861, by
BEADLE AND COMPANY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

THE TEXAN SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

THE RACE FOR LIFE.

OUR story opens upon the afternoon of October 4th, 1835.

It was a clear, pleasant day, the sun shining brightly, but the fresh southern breeze tempered the warmth of the "Day-god," that would otherwise have been oppressive. A gayly-attired horseman was riding along the main trail leading from the Presidio del Rio Grande to Gonzales, by way of San Antonio de Bexar. His animal, a small, clean-limbed mustang mare, bore evidence of long and steady traveling, but maintained her long, swinging stride with a machine-like regularity.

The rider was, probably, two or three and forty years of age, of well-built and muscular frame, about medium size. Of dark complexion, and jet-black hair that hung down to his shoulders, and a long, heavy mustache of the same color; the rest of his face being closely shorn.

He was habited in the picturesque costume of a Mexican ranchero: spencer jacket of velveteen, trowsers laced along the outward seams, disclosing the drawers of once snow-white lawn, but now somewhat soiled by his long journey; and half-boots of Cordovan leather, stamped, and heavily spurred at the heel. Around his waist was a scarf of scarlet China crape, while pushed back from his brow was a broad-brimmed *sombrero*, banded with gold bullion.

Picture to yourself a horseman thus habited, seated in a deep saddle-tree of Moorish shape and Mexican manufacture, with housings of leather stamped with antique patterns, such as were worn by the caparisoned steeds of the Conquistadores; picture to yourself such a horseman, and you will

have before your mind's eye a fair counterpart of Alonzo Starr.

He suddenly ceased the tune he was humming, and sharply pulled up his mare, peering keenly toward a considerable-sized *motte* at some little distance ahead, and to the right of his present position. Then veering to the left he rode on, intending to give the timber a wide berth, muttering:

"Can my eyes have played me false? I would almost swear that I saw the gleam of steel, and flutter of a lance pennon. If so, then they must be enemies, and I should hate most confoundedly to meet any just at present. I might pass for a Mexican, if there were none present who knew me, but I am rather too well known to run the risk. Ha! by all that's good, I was right. They are guerrillas, as I feared!" Wheeling his horse's head and touching her with the spur, he darted away from the *motte* at right-angles to his previous course.

The bray of a single trumpet, then loud shouts and cries, followed by the rapid, tumultuous beat of hoofs upon the hard prairie, all told him that he was being hotly pursued, and that the result depended simply upon a question of speed and endurance. He glanced behind him anxiously, and when he saw the number of the foe, his features contracted in a deep scowl.

He thought he recognized the band, and if so, then capture meant certain death, perhaps more—torture. There were nearly two score in all, well armed and superbly mounted, as a general thing. The fugitive turned gloomily to his gallant little mare, and when he thought how many miles she had carried him since morning, a bitter smile glinted across his swart features. For he knew that if the guerrillas' mounts were fresh and unjaded, his capture was certain.

And this fear was confirmed as he noted the long, elastic leaps and quick recovery of those in pursuit; and then examined his rifle. It was a short, heavy piece, of English manufacture, and a breech-loader, carrying a heavy ball. Right well he knew its qualities, and he was determined not to be taken unavenged. The lancers' victory, if such it must be, should at least cost them dear.

He glanced back again, and saw that he was being overhauled, slowly 'tis true, but rapidly enough to banish all hope of protracting the race until dark, even supposing his mare to

be capable of such a task in her jaded state. The guerrillas also noted this fact, and rent the air with their wild, exultant yells, as they spurred on, each striving to be foremost.

"Ay, ye hell-hounds! screech on; it'll take more than that to wipe out Lone Star. Yelp on, but mind, before long, that you don't have better cause than you've now. Wait until you hear my pet speak, and see which does the most execution," muttered the fugitive, vindictively.

Then he removed the top from a flask of brandy, and poured some of the liquor into the palm of his hand, then bending forward, he clapped it over the nostrils of his noble little mustang. This action he repeated, and then drenched her ears as well. He had tried the remedy more than once, and was not surprised when his horse bounded ahead with increased vigor.

The pursuers now began to fire their carbines, perhaps hoping that a fortunate shot would put an end to the race of life and death. Starr smiled sardonically, as he heard the bullets hiss around him, nearly all wide of the mark.

And he wound the reins loosely around the pommel of his saddle, muttering:

"If that's your game, I'll show you that two parties can play at it," he said, at the same time turning in his saddle.

The mare ran in a pacing stride, gentle and smooth as a cradle, without the quick jerking motion that the majority of horses have, except a natural pacer, and it was easy for a good marksman to secure a certain aim.

The rifle rose slowly to Starr's cheek, and a loud report followed the pulling of the trigger. When the breeze lifted the sulphurous smoke, the fugitive saw a horse running wildly across the plain, but the saddle was empty. Two of the guerrillas, while in full career, stooped in their saddles, and adroitly lifted up their fallen comrade; and then one of them balanced the limp, lifeless body before him, falling to the rear, while the others spurred on, eager to avenge their companion's death.

The scout uttered a loud, taunting laugh, as he noted the success of his shot, and regardless of the balls that fell around or behind him, coolly proceeded to reload his rifle. The Mexicans were drawing nearer, and he knew that once within range of their lassoes—in their hand, a weapon far more to be dreaded

than pistol or gun—his career would be short indeed; and as he glanced over his shoulder, while slipping the cartridge in place, he could see the foremost men disengaging the coils from their saddle-bows.

Then turning he delivered another shot, but the guerrillas were upon the look-out, and crouched down close to the sides of their animals. The bullet found a mark, however, and settled in one of the rearmost horses' brain, as the pursuers were descending a slight slope. The mustang fell, casting the unprepared rider full upon his head. The Mexican never arose again of his own accord. His neck was broken.

Then came a scattering volley of pistol and musket-balls, and Starr felt his gallant little mustang give a spasmodic bound, and then a gurgling groan, that but too plainly told him the race was over. He disengaged his feet from the huge wooden stirrups, and prepared for a leap. This was done none too soon, for, true to the last, the dying creature made several bounds and then fell in a heap, dying as she dropped.

The hunted man cast himself down beside the body, for he well knew there was no chance of escape, and resolved to sell his life as dearly as lay in his power. The guerrillas, when they beheld this maneuver, divided into two bodies, one spurring upon either side, while nothing was exposed to the scout's aim but a hand or armed foot.

His rifle spoke, and one of the horses fell, with a wild, piercing scream of agony, while the rider hastily scrambled to his feet, only to receive a second messenger from the death-dealing gun, and dropped in his tracks, mortally wounded.

The lancers made a dash toward the undaunted Texan, hoping to reach and overpower him before he could reload. In the mean time, several cast their lassoes at the prostrate heap, but the scout was upon his guard, and the casts proved futile.

Then he arose with a pistol in either hand, and fired them point-blank in the faces of the foremost Mexicans. The range was short, and there could be but one result; two lives were added to the price demanded for his own. Still he was not quelled, and drew his long bowie-knife.

A lasso whistled through the air, and the dreaded noose settled over his head and shoulders; then he was hurled violently to the ground. One stroke of the keen edge severed the loop,

heedless of the self-inflicted wound, but before he could arise, his form was covered with half a dozen of the enemy. In vain he struggled; despite his almost superhuman exertions, he was secured by several folds of the rawhide lasso.

Even during their confusion, he wondered that he was not killed outright, if only for revenge; but when the weight was removed from him, he learned the reason, and for the moment he almost wished that they had murdered him. But this feeling soon vanished, for he was not of a nature to despair long, and while there was life there was hope.

A dark-bearded, fierce-looking man, of almost gigantic build, spoke a few quiet words to his followers, who immediately scattered to collect their dead and the loose horses. Then he came and stood over Starr, giving him a brutal kick in the side, as if to emphasize his words.

"Blood of the devil! sir Texan, but you are handy with your weapons. But, cursed dog, you will not have much to boast of when we take you before the captain."

"Go on. That's your style, cowardly hound; you show your bravery by taunting a bound man. *You* were not so ready to face me when I had a gun in my hands," sneered Starr.

"You talk big, sir, but wait until you meet the captain. You will change your tune then," sneered the Mexican.

"He can't be more villainous than you are; any change would be for the better."

"Even 'ñor Crispino Montalado?"

"There is no man upon God's earth whom I would sooner meet, face to face," returned the scout; but he added, beneath his breath, "but not in this fix, though. The game would be far too one-sided to be interesting."

"Well, we will test your words. There is where you are destined. Perhaps it may interest you to know that your death or capture was our sole object in coming this far from our home. Don't you feel highly flattered? You should," coolly added the guerrilla, as he adroitly rolled up a cigarette and lighted it; then seating himself upon the dead mare, he resumed:

"Yes, 'ñor American, our worthy leader thought it was time to pay off his old debts, as he contemplates retiring from pub-

lic life, and will begin with you. And I promise you his friendship will not be lessened when he calls the muster-roll after our return, and finds out how attentive you have been. Blessed Virgin! but I would hate to give a *claco* for your lease of life, then!"

"Bah! I hear a coyote yelping," retorted the prisoner. "You and your captain will be like your companions yonder long before I have done with life. Do you really believe that you are smart enough to take me a week's journey a captive?" he added, tauntingly.

The Mexican did not reply, save by casting the stump of his cigar into Starr's face, as his men came up, and in a few moments the prisoner was bound upon a mustang's back, beyond a possibility of falling, or throwing himself off. Thus, still bearing their dead, the troops filed from the spot, and rode leisurely in a southerly direction.

The captive had ample time for reflection upon his condition, and he admitted that it was a most unenviable one. He knew but too well what the guerrilla's allusion to "the captain" meant, and that once in his power, death would be inevitable. A short explanation—necessary for the story also—will show the reader what cause he had for this conclusion.

Alonzo Starr was a Kentuckian by birth, and his parents had removed to Texas while he was yet a child. His father became a grazier on quite an extensive scale, numbering many hundred head of horses and cattle within his cattle-farm, or pastures. When they grew older, Alonzo and his two elder brothers pursued the occupation of catching the wild horse and besides thus adding materially to the main stock, would occasionally take a drove to the settlements in order to sell them to the more wealthy planters and traders.

When perhaps twenty-five years old, Alonzo Starr, or as his name was paraphrased by his companions—and by which he afterward became known far and wide—"Lone Star," during an extended trip into the Mexican States, met a maiden near Iloya, a hamlet some fifteen miles from Jalapa, and after a short but eventful wooing, he brought her home as his bride.

Eventful, we say, for Joaquina Lateran was the intended bride of Crispino Montalado, a Jarocho, who had already

gained a reputation for his daring and adroitness, and who, in a fit of jealousy, attacked Starr in the presence of the coveted maiden.

But the youth was not unskilled in the use of the sword, and he soon disabled his rival. Then the girl, impressed by his gallantry and address, consented to clope with him, and being hotly pursued by her relatives, had no little difficulty in crossing the Rio Grande in safety.

For over a year they lived in peace and fancied security, but the destroyer was upon their track, and one day, when the husband returned from an extended trip, a sad scene of desolation met his gaze as he crossed the summit of a swell, from whence the first glimpse could be had of his home.

Where the little cluster of buildings had stood, nothing but a heap of charred ruins remained, while the plain around was covered with coyotes and zopilotes, those scavengers of the desert. Wildly he spurred forward and rode close to the ruins; the wolves slinking away, howling hysterically, as if loth to leave the bones of the wantonly-slaughtered cattle and horses, while the vultures flapped silently to a little distance, and then settled down, being so gorged that they could scarcely rise from the ground.

His worst fears were confirmed. The human bones scattered around the door-yard, or half charred by the heat, told the fearful tale but too clearly. His loved ones were dead, all dead. Father, mother, brothers, wife and child—all murdered. And he could guess what had come before.

He moved about as one in a dream, and placed the remains of his kindred in one large grave that he hollowed out beneath the group of algarobias.

Then he set to work in earnest. His keen eyes, undimmed by tears, glowing like balls of fire, took up the trail, and he galloped swiftly along in pursuit of the marauders. The trail was plain and broad. Hundreds of stock cattle and horses had been driven before.

He had little doubt as to where the trail would end. The direction confirmed that. Besides, he remembered the bitter oath of future revenge made by his defeated rival, and bitterly cursed himself that he had not then and there put it beyond the power of the Jarocho of ever making it good.

For days he followed the trail, and then came upon them, one afternoon. And then his rifle spoke, at every report adding another unit to offset his debt of vengeance. He was pursued, and retreating, kept up the running fight with deadly effect, until, discouraged, the Mexicans abandoned the chase, and rode after the main band.

Then the avenger followed them, day after day, picking off man after man, avoiding as if by instinct the snares and ambuscades that were set for him ; but never, by some strange mischance, was an opportunity offered of settling his account with Montalado in person, until the mountain retreat of the marauders was reached. Still the avenger lurked around, his senses appearing supernaturally acute, and all attempts at the killing or capture of the scout proving futile.

One day, by a lucky shot at long range, he shattered the Jarocho's left arm so badly that it had to be amputated. Seeing him fall, Starr retreated and made his way to Texas, deeming his foe dead. But when he learned the real facts, he returned and sought for more complete revenge.

He led an erratic life, adding to his score at every opportunity, until he was regarded with absolute terror by his foes, and they began to whisper that the devil had taken the form of the Texan, to avenge some slight put upon himself. But Montalado knew better, and offered large rewards for the head, or live body of the man who had so mutilated him, and reduced the number of his band.

But, until this period, Starr had eluded pursuit, and it is not to be wondered at that his thoughts were somewhat gloomy, as he racked his brain to devise some means of escape, & he rode along in the midst of his captors.

CHAPTER II.

THE CRAWL OF THE SERPENT.

THE guerrillas did not cease their steady trot until nearly dark, when they halted in a small *motte*, and began preparations for encamping. These were simple enough, for the horses had been watered an hour before at a clear *arroyo* a tributary of the Rio Nueces, or "River of Nuts," and would require no more until the main branch should be reached, in the morning. Their "water-gourds" had also been replenished, as the leader, Benito Martinez, knew that none would be found at the "prairie island."

A party was detailed to bury their dead, while others secured the horses within the shadow of the trees, and placed provender before them. It was not considered safe to picket them in the open ground. Perhaps other eyes than those of their masters might chance upon them; perhaps *los Indios*—the Comanche. Dreaded name! A cold thrill of apprehension played along the spine of each Mexican, as it was whispered.

And not without good cause. Mortal race never had a more deadly or unscrupulous foe than the "Queen of the Prairies," as they vauntingly term themselves, have proved to the descendants of the "Children of the Sun." The cry, *los Indios* *braves*, is to them what the alarm of fire in mid-ocean is to the mariner.

Then a well-screened fire was built, and the dirty-looking strips of dried beef that hung at every saddle, were hurriedly warmed through and dispatched, hunger being the only sauce required to assist its mastication. The prisoner was not given any, although, despite his unenviable situation, the food would have been acceptable, as he had eaten nothing since early dawn. But he was too proud to ask a favor, and contented himself, as best he might, by fervently hoping that each mouthful they bolted would choke the gluttons.

"See, now, cursed heretic; do you think you are smart

enough to escape from that fix? I fear we will prove your boast a mere lie. Thunder! 'ñor Texan, it will be a happy day for the captain, when we show him the man whom he has hunted so long, a prisoner."

"Bah! greaser; if he sees me, 'twill be as he did once before; only that, instead of losing an arm, 'twill be his head. And you, too, my blackamoor friend, will have cause to remember this night."

"'Tis true, but not in the way you mean. I am to be chief when Montalado has you safe. *That* is to be my reward," said the Mexican, with an air of triumph.

"Don't you wish you may get the commission?" retorted Starr. "That will never be. If you have me with you at this time to-morrow, call me a Mexican. And a worse or more degrading name than that was never invented!"

"Bah! you talk big. But wait. We will see," turning away from the captive, and after detailing two men for sentinels, laid down upon the ground, wrapping his gaudy serape around him, and with the hollow of his saddle for a pillow.

The minutes rolled on, drearily enough to the scout. His position was as uncomfortable as could well be. Did he relax his weary muscles in the least, the hard rawhide cords cut deeply into his flesh, and impeding the circulation, inflicted the most exquisite tortures. A cord around his neck forced him to keep his head in a wearying position. Did he drop it forward, strangulation was the result. His legs were widely extended, on either side of a projecting root, and bound there, while the slippery moss beneath his feet threatened at every moment to increase the strain by his partially-bantered feet slipping.

The beads of cold sweat stood out over his face, and he bitterly vowed vengeance upon his captors, for the moment forgetting that he was powerless to inflict it. To add to his misery, the ravenous musketoes buzzed around him in countless swarms, and literally covered his person with their stinging, poisonous bites.

Still, he did not despair; it was not in his nature. He had made so many hairbreadth escapes, when death stared him in the face, that it seemed a matter of course that he would manage to effect an escape before the long journey that lay

between him and the mountain retreat of the robbers should be completed.

The two guards that had been detailed for duty, did not appear very apprehensive of danger, and no sooner did the steady, prolonged breathings announce their oblivion, than they reëntered the little glade, and selecting a spot where the bright moonlight shone down through the trees, sat down together, and one of them produced a greasy, well-thumbed pack of Spanish cards.

They are soon deeply absorbed in a game of *monté*, playing for small stakes, with varying success. A queen and knave are laid face upward. Thus a *monté* table is established and the play proceeds. Absorbed in calculating the chances of the game, an hour passes without note being taken of time.

It was a scene characteristic of the race. One would think they were born with a deck of cards in their hands. Certain it is, that to find one of the lower class of Mexicans without them, would equal the old proverb, "catch a weasel asleep."

But at length one of the players is "broken," and disgusted with his ill-luck, he laid down, and soon forgot his losses in deep slumber. The other imitates his example, without a thought of their neglected trust.

But one pair of human eyes were open in the entire *motte*—those of Alonzo Starr, the captured Texan. He could not sleep for the reasons before mentioned. Other eyes and ears were upon the alert, however, and more trustworthy than their masters, they scented danger in the air. A low snort, and quick, suspicious stamp of the foot, attracted Starr's attention.

He could distinguish the tremulous quivering of a mustang's ears, and a wild hope sprung up in his heart. It was true, the alarm might have been occasioned by a clinking coyote, or even the more dangerous jaguar; but he hoped not. He prayed that it might be man. Even the Indian would be preferable to those in whose hands he was now a captive.

The horse soon quieted down, but the emotion excited in the scout's heart was not so easily calmed. His keen black eye roved over every object that lay within his range of vision; and more than once his heart gave a wild throb, as he thought he saw the creeping form of a man. But a second

look would prove it to be but the shadow cast by some bough waving in the fresh breeze.

The minutes seemed like hours, as they slowly crept by. Then the prisoner started again; his eye had caught the shadowy semblance of a human form. He closed them tightly thinking he was again deceived, but when he looked once more he saw that it was just crossing a faint strip of moonlight. That it was a man, he could no longer doubt, and the glistening bronzed skin told him that it was an Indian—those Bedouins of the American deserts.

Then he saw the glittering eye of the spy turned upon him. The savage partially arose, and uttered a low hiss, as if to attract his attention. Starr returned the signal with renewed hope, that was strengthened by the next motion of the red-skin.

This was a slow, undulating movement of the right hand, imitating the progress of a serpent, followed by a peculiar sign that the captive readily interpreted. With difficulty he restrained the cry of joy that arose to his lips; for he knew that he was saved, that escape was assured.

In the first sign, he recognized that by which the Comanches are universally known; the latter told him the name of the spy—"Spotted Hawk," a young chief who called him brother. And he knew, too, that he was recognized, his situation comprehended, and that he would be rescued even at the expense of the chief's life. Such was the bond of friendship between the white man and the red-skin.

Spotted Hawk slowly and silently retreated without discovery. He was concealed from the mustangs' view, and to windward of them, else the alarm would have been given. For the prairie-born horse knows no more bitter enemy than the red-man, unless from long companionship with them, this fear is changed to fidelity.

For a few minutes all was still, and then the prisoner heard a faint rustle close behind the tree to which he was bound. Then the cord that encircled his throat was cut, and his head fell forward with a feeling of the most exquisite relief and repose. But as another cord was severed he whispered hurriedly:

"Carefully, my brother. If you cut the rope now I will fall down, for I can not use my legs. They are asleep."

"Wagh! Spotted Hawk will hold his white brother up. Then it will be good," muttered the chief, as he rapidly divided all but the one turn just below the armpits.

This, together with the support of his strong arms, held Starr erect, and as the blood began to bound through the benumbed members, it was with the greatest difficulty that he refrained from crying out, the torment was so tantalizing.

Just then, as if suspecting what was going on, Benito Martinez suddenly raised his head, and peered keenly at the scout, who, noting the action, had thrown his head back into the old awkward position.

After a moment's scouting the guerrilla sunk back, with a muttered exclamation and short laugh, as if relieved from some fear; most probably having dreamed that his captive had kept his word and effected an escape.

It was a close shave, and the scout knew not when it might be repeated. When he had fully regained the use of his limbs and the savage had severed the last bond, he whispered:

"'Twon't do for me to go with you just yet. You saw the Mexican's action. If I should be missed before your blow is struck, it might spoil all. Give me your knife, and go lead your braves up. When you are ready, give the cry of your name—*sike, low*, so as not to alarm the sleepers. But remember, no one must touch *that* man, but me. Tell your braves so. Do you understand?"

"The ears of Spotted Hawk are long. The Catcher of Mustangs shall take the scalp of his enemy," and the Comanche chief dropped to the ground, gliding away through the darkness without a rustle to denote his progress.

The guerrillas slept on, without a suspicion of the coils of the serpent that was slowly and surely closing about them; that the keen weapons of their dreaded foe—the *Indians*—were even then bared to drink their life-blood. They slept on, the last slumber for all but one, while many knew no awakening in this life.

Then came the subdued call of the hawk. The scout abandoned his position, and with a catlike tread he crept to the side of the gigantic Mexican; but the knife left him by his rescuer, was thrust in his belt. He intended using it, but not just then. He glanced around him.

Dusky, half-nude forms were crawling through the glade. Two stationed themselves by the side of the somnolent gamblers. Others each selected their man, while the small, lithe form of the Spotted Hawk stood erect, with cocked and half-poised rifle.

His eyes roved around, and saw that his men were ready, and waiting only for the signal. It came, wild and piercing; the Comanche war-whoop echoed through the little glade. Then all was confusion.

The dull, heavy thud of a tomahawk as it was buried to the eye in the victim's brain. The grit of steel as the keen knives sever flesh, cartilage and even bone. The wild shrieks of agony, the hollow groans and convulsed writhings of the doomed Mexicans.

With wild yells of terror, two men partially elude the descending weapons, and strive to flee. One is overtaken by a bullet from the chief's rifle; the other is stricken down by the hatchet of his foe, ere he makes a second leap.

The robber leader starts from his rest, only to be driven back by a sledge-hammer-like blow from the fist of his late captive, whose sinewy fingers are twined around his bronzed throat, and a knee pressed upon his breast. Still he struggles, but it is in vain. Then he grows weaker, and sinks into insensibility. But he is not destined to die yet. That would be but a poor revenge, and a lasso is hastily wound about his form. Then the scout arises.

The massacre is over, and the dead, scalpless forms lying scattered around, are all that is left of the vaunting band that laid down in fancied security but a few short hours before. The slain are plundered and despoiled, the horses are disposed of by lot, and then the victors bivouac in the glade, while the ghastly, mutilated forms of their victims lay all about them. Little reck they for that, and a guard is posted, while the remainder, with two exceptions, lay down and sleep: perchance to live over again in their dreams the bloody drama they had just enacted.

These exceptions are Alonzo Starr and the young chief, Spotted Hawk. There is a grim smile upon their faces as they note the guerrilla leader occupying the position where the other had undergone so much torture. His devilish inge-

guity was recoiling upon his own head, and they laughed at the thought of his inventing a trap for his own torment.

They half reclined beneath another tree, not far distant, where they could keep an eye upon the prisoner, and lighting their pipes the two friends conversed in low, guarded tones.

"How was it that you chanced along this way, or did the chief know I was a prisoner?" asked Starr, in the Comanche tongue, which he spoke fluently.

"Spotted Hawk knew," laconically replied the chief.

"But *how*?"

"If the Catcher of Horses looks, he can see the paint on my braves' faces. They are on the war-path. Their eyes are good, and were not shut when they passed my brother's trail. Then they saw more; that many horses were in chase. They saw that these were mounted, and followed the broad trail; they wanted scalps. Then they found the mare that Spotted Hawk had given the white hunter, and knew that he was in danger. They rode hard, and my brother saw the rest," tersely explained the chief.

"It was lucky for me. But I won't say thank you, for I know you always prefer deeds to words. The time may come when I can repay you."

"We are brothers, that is enough," rejoined the savage; then, as if desirous of escaping any further remarks upon the subject, he asked:

"What will White Star do with the Buffalo man?" nodding toward the tree to which Benito Martinez was bound.

"I don't know. Let him free, perhaps. Will study it out by daylight."

"Wagh! he has got good scalp. Too good to throw away," muttered Spotted Hawk, looking at the long, clustering locks of jet black hair, while one hand played nervously with the handle of his scalping-knife.

"Look here, chief. Did I claim any thing from all these men? did I take a single dollar, or even a horse to pay for the one of mine that they killed?"

"White Star's tongue is not like a snake's; there is no fork in it. What he speaks is true," responded the savage.

"Did I not capture that man—did any one help me?"

"Wagh!" grunted the red-man.

"Then he is mine to do with as I please. If I say *die*, it shall be so; and if I say *go free*, who will tell me that I lie?" demanded Lone Star, warmly.

"My brother's words are wise. The chief was wrong; his eyes were under a cloud," replied the chief, with dignity.

"And now the cloud is gone, so let us shake hands and shut our eyes to it," added the scout, and after the proposed ceremony they laid down side by side, and soon were lost in slumber that was only broken by the approach of day.

The Mexican awaited anxiously for his fate to be decided, expecting at every moment that he would be sacrificed, if only for his brutal treatment of the Texan when the latter was in the position he now occupied. A fire was kindled and a scanty meal of the captured beef hastily dispatched; then the horses were prepared for the road.

After a short consultation with the chief, Lone Star led up the horse belonging to Martinez, and then cut the thongs that secured the legs of the prisoner, as also the cord embracing his throat. Then he spoke, addressing the pale and quaking Mexican:

"You see, Señor Vagabond, I have kept my promise. But it will be at the loss of your expected commission and—*something else*. See, I give you your horse and your life; you may go. Thanks to me your scalp is still upon your head; otherwise, it would be keeping company with those of your comrades.

"But I have a feeling of friendship for you, so great that I wish a keepsake to remember you by. What shall it be? *Your ears*—ha! that is it! I beg that you will present me with them," ironically pleaded Lone Star.

"Spare me!" shrieked the guerrilla, for he well knew how terribly in earnest the scout was, from the cold, steel-like gleam in his eyes. "Mercy, for the love of God!"

"Mercy!" hissed the scout, fiercely; "yes, I'll have mercy,—I'll spare you! Did you spare my family when they begged for mercy? Did you spare those innocent ones who never did harm to you? Yes, you spared them; and but for one thing, by the God that made me, I would roast you over a slow fire and dance to the music of your cries!"

"But the head devil of you all must know who caused the

death of his picked men, and you are the only one I can send. Tell him what you have seen, and tell him that he need not hope to escape. If alive, I will kill him; if dead, I will dig up his body and roast it before feeding it to the coyotes.

"Tell him this, and bless your saints that you escape as easily as you will have done; that your head comes not off with your ears. But beware; if you cross my path again your fate is sealed—nothing will save you. Cease your screeching, or, by all that's good, I'll take ears, scalp, and all!" hissed Lone Star, as he motioned two of the delighted savages to hold the captive's head.

Then he drew his keen knife, and despite the cries and groans of the unfortunate guerrilla, both of his ears were shorn off, close to his head. Casting them aside with an exclamation of disgust, Lone Star drew a pistol, and cocking it, lest the Mexican should try to avenge his mutilation, he severed the bonds, motioning him to mount his snorting horse.

There was an instantaneous change in the man's bearing, that surprised none more than the scout, and for the first time he began to comprehend that he had been mistaken in his estimate of the Mexican's character. The look of pain and terror had vanished, and his gigantic frame seemed to increase in dimensions, as, with a light laugh, he tossed back the long, blood-bedabbled hair, and said:

"Thanks, 'ñor Tejano, a thousand thanks. Your courtesy overwhelms me, and I can not find words to express my gratitude. Never mind, I may be able to repay my obligation some day, and then—*then* the balance will rest upon the other side. Understand me?"

"Good! I glory in your spunk," sneered Lone Star; "I will not have so much trouble in finding you then. May that day come soon, and the best man win."

"Until then, *adios*," said the Mexican, as he vaulted into the saddle.

"Look here; you've forgotten something," called out the Texan, as he stooped and picked up the ears upon the end of a stick, and extended them to the guerrilla.

Benito Martinez took them without a word, but the great veins swelled to the thickness of a finger in his throat and flushed face, while the black eyes seemed like coals of living

him. But he restrained his passion, and removing his black, glazed *sombrero*, he added, with a courtly bow :

"Good-day, gentlemen," and then rode slowly out of the little *motte* that had been so fatal to him and his comrades, never once deigning to glance behind him.

Spotted Hawk looked keenly at Lone Star, as if he would read the inmost workings of his heart, then slowly uttered :

"If my brother has changed his mind, let him speak. Before the swiftest bird could fly a rifle-shot, the scalp of the Deep Voice shall hang at his belt."

"No, no, chief, let him go. He has given warning, and I shall be upon my guard. Let him go," returned Lone Star, as if speaking to himself.

"When the Catcher of Horses hears the signal of the rattlesnake, does he put his foot upon its head, or does he wait until after the blow is struck?" said the chief, laying his hand upon the other's arm, and speaking warmly.

"I have said. He shall go free. Has the Spotted Hawk forgotten his promise?" retorted the Texan, shaking the hand from his shoulder.

"Is the Comanche chief a dog that he should eat his own words? His talk has but one side to it," replied the Indian, in an offended tone, turning upon his heel and walking away.

"I was wrong, chief, and you must forget what I said," hastily exclaimed the scout, as he reached the side of the savage. "Shall a black cloud lie between brothers?"

"See!" returned the savage, as he extended his open hand before him, and suited the action to his words, "the Comanche blows it away. It is gone. Is my brother satisfied?"

"Yes, yes, let us forget it. But I have had a good deal to try my temper of late, and I hardly know what I do or say. But the sun is up. Shall we ride together? I go to Gonzales."

"We must part, then. Is my brother going to fight the Mexicans? The hatchet is dug up between them and your people."

"So I hear. Yes, chief, I will be in it, I dare say. But, Hawk, on which side do you go? Will you be a friend or an enemy?" anxiously queried Lone Star.

"Spotted Hawk is a friend to White Star; he will not fight

against *him*. Neither will he go on the war-path for any but his own people. The Comanche does not sell his blood," tersely replied the savage.

"I might have known it," muttered the Texan; then continuing aloud: "Well, if we meet in battle we will shoot the other way."

"It is well. If *you* want help, send to Spotted Hawk. Five hundred braves will bring his answer," proudly said the chief.

And then they parted, each going his way, and feeling assured that in the other he had a true and sincere friend. Some writers have scouted the idea of truth and honesty being in the red-man's nature—that a favor is never remembered. Can they prove the truth of their statements?

CHAPTER III.

"BRIGHT EYES."

MOUNTED upon a noble-looking mustang, selected from among those once belonging to the ill-fated band of guerrillas, Lone Star rapidly retraced the ground he had already covered twice, of late, his mind deeply occupied with the momentous tidings that had been the prime cause of his forced journey—the outbreak of the long war between Mexico and his adopted State.

On the first day of October, 1835, the "first blood" was shed on the western bank of the Guadalupe river, opposite Gonzales—the Texans under Colonel John H. Moore, the enemy being commanded by Castonado, who finally retreated to San Antonio de Bexar.

The alarm had spread far and wide, reaching Starr, while straying at the Presidio del Rio Grande. And it was upon his journey, to take part in the contest, that he was captured by the followers of his deadliest foe, as detailed.

Leave we him for a short time, and introduce another character, who is destined to play no small part in this ~~our~~ *our* tale of blended fact and fiction.

The intelligence of the fight, had spread like wild-fire over the land, and hundreds of all ages and occupations were flocking around the standard of freedom. But we must deal with a certain unpretentious house, situated some twelve or fifteen miles west of Matagorda. It was inhabited by a widow, together with her only child—a son, and her niece, a pretty black-eyed brunette named Mattie Foster, with several servants.

They were poor, but the son, Dwight Ives, proved himself a good manager, and the farm furnished them with enough to live upon ; at the same time, they were laying up money for a “ rainy day,” slowly, it is true, but steadily.

It is the 7th of October. Dwight Ives leaps from the saddle of his panting horse, and rushes into the house, where sits his mother and cousin—who is more, his promised bride.

“ Mother, put me up some provisions, in the oilcloth haversack ; I’m going !”

“ Going ! what do you mean, son ?” asked the kind, genial-faced old lady, startled by his sudden entrance and excited air.

“ Why, after the greasers, of course. That’s the only game worth hunting now. Where’s Josefa ? she must hurry,” returned the youth.

“ Now, what new freak has got into that wild head of yours, Dwight ? Some folly, I know,” interrupted Mattie, with laughing words, but a dull, heavy sinking at her heart, for she knew but too well what he meant.

“ Why, I met Mr. Collingsworth at the city, and he was drumming up recruits, to wipe out a gang of Mexicans, that have been cutting up some of their didoes at Victoria, and I promised to go. There’s not the least bit of danger, for the greasers will run at first sight ; so it will only be a pleasure-ride. But I must hurry,” he added, giving the necessary directions to Josefa, their old servant, and replenishing his stock of ammunition.

“ My son, are you determined to go ? Can nothing I say make you change your mind ?” asked the widow, tremblingly, turning to Dwight.

“ Please don’t try, mother,” pleaded the boy. “ I have passed my word, and surely you would not wish me to break it !”

"Well, if it must be so, I can only say God speed you!" said the mother, in a constrained voice, rising, and attending to packing the haversack; but he little knew the agony that was rending her heart.

"Well, you are just the best mother that ever *did* live; but there's no danger. I must be off. A kiss all round, and then good-by!" he added, suiting the action to the words.

"Take care of yourself, darling, and remember that you are all we have left," murmured the widow.

"Mind, 'Bright Eyes,' and come back a General, at least, and be sure to bring Lieutenant Collingsworth with you," called out Mattie, as he leaped into the saddle.

"Little cormorant, will not one lover suffice?" laughed the brave little boy, as he wafted a kiss toward them, and then galloped away, little dreaming of the grief and agony that he had left behind him.

"Bright Eyes."

Yes, the name was well bestowed. Given at first in playfulness by Mattie, both as a play upon his name, and from his large, bright blue eyes, it had spread over the neighborhood, until he was seldom termed any thing else.

He was but little over twenty-one, tall and symmetrical, strong and agile, hardened by exercise, and the wild sports of the frontier, in which he was a proficient; with long, wavy nut-brown hair, slight silky mustache, and clear ruddy complexion; he was truly a winsome sight, as he rode swiftly along, sitting his horse with the skill and grace of a Comanche.

He joined the band in due time, and on the 8th they arrived at Victoria, where they learned that the marauders had left that same morning, in the direction of Goliad, and they pressed on in hot pursuit.

A little before sundown upon the next day, a horseman appeared in view, and observing their party, abruptly halted as if in doubt whether they were friends or foes. Only for a short time did this hesitation last, and then rapidly advancing, the Texans soon knew him for Lone Star. They greeted him with cheers, for he was well known by most of those present and by name to the remainder.

There was a warm greeting between him and Bright Eyes, for they were close friends; indeed, the latter thought there

was no person so wise and skillful as the scout, ever since he had been allowed to accompany him on a chase after the wild horse. And Starr loved him as he might have done a son or younger brother.

The purpose of the expedition was soon made known to the scout, and he fell into the ranks along side of Dwight, declaring that he wished no better fun. During the long ride he detailed to the wondering youth his late adventures, and inquired particularly after the mother and cousin of his friend; for Mattie could do any thing with the wild borderer. In her hands he was pliable as wax.

A little after dark the band divided, the two friends going with the larger. But by some mischance—a most fortunate one as it afterward proved to be—they strayed from the right course, and instead of striking the San Antonio at the *lower* ford, found themselves unexpectedly upon its bank at some distance above the town.

No time was to be lost. Being unwilling to retrace their steps in order to fall into the trail that would conduct them to their point of destination, where they knew their comrades in arms must be impatiently awaiting them, they resolved to make their way through a thicket of *mezquite* bushes, which here fringed the margin of the river, in traversing which they expected to find themselves among their companions at the *lower* ford.

While passing through this thicket, the horse of Lone Star suddenly took fright at some object concealed beneath the umbrage afforded by a clump of *mezquite*. It was too dark to distinguish the cause, but Starr prepared himself for such consequences as might follow, and drawing his revolver, he vociferated the natural interrogatory :

“Who goes there?”

“A friend,” responded a strong and clear voice from the place of coverture, in good Spanish.

The scout thought he recognized the voice as that of an old acquaintance, a Mexican whom he had known long in Goliad, and asked :

“Is that you, Juan Colante?”

“No,” replied the mysterious “man of the woods,” “*I am MEAW!*”

It was truly he, who had long been lost by his countrymen, and who was destined in a few weeks to still further immortalize himself as the *Jaro-martyr* of the Alamo. All who are conversant with the history of Texas will realize with what joy and enthusiasm he was greeted, and then he fell into the ranks, vowing that he would once more fight in the cause of freedom.

When the entire company of Collingsworth found themselves assembled at the place of rendezvous, near the lower ford, there were just forty-eight of them, including Milaw. They divided themselves into parties of ten each, one being left to guard the horses, while the others, each being well supplied with trusty guides, marched by different routes to the assault.

Lone Star led one, with Bright Eyes at his side, and in a short time they entered the town, where several axes were procured, by means best known to themselves, without raising the alarm.

A friendly citizen showed them the room which the commanding officer used as his sleeping-quarters, and the keen, heavy-bladed axes, wielded by strong arms, soon hewed down the door, and the colonel was taken a prisoner from his bed. But the ringing sound of the blows had given the alarm, and a sentinel hailed them, at the same time discharging his musket, the bullet from which scarred the shoulder of Lone Star.

But it was his last shot. The heavy rifle of the scout leaped, as if by instinct to his shoulder, the trigger was touched and the soldier fell without a groan. This seemed the signal for general confusion and uproar.

The reports of fire-arms and loud cries and shouts were commingled. The Mexican soldiers were fully aroused, and opened a furious but harmless fusillade from their quarters; for the Texans had scattered, and the bullets hissed harmlessly over their heads, or wide of the mark.

But the blaze of the soldiers' guns served as a mark for the colonist riflemen, and at almost every report, groans and shrieks were heard, testifying to the accuracy of their aim. The garrison were called upon to surrender, in their own language, by Lone Star, and some one of their number, more brave than his comrades, asked for honorable terms, and they would submit.

"No," answered the scout, in a tone of feigned anxiety, "they say they will massacre every one of you if you hesitate. Come out—come out quick; I can not keep them back—come out if you wish to save your lives! I can keep them back no longer!"

"Oh, *do* for God's sake keep them back!" was the reply, in trembling tones; "we will come out and surrender immediately!" and they, to a man, rushed forth from their retreat and laid down their arms, begging pitifully for their lives.

Thus, by his ready wit, the place was taken without the loss of a man on the side of the Texans, while, had the Mexicans known the real force opposed to them, it would not have been surrendered without a fight; how it would have ended, who can say? If taken, it would have been at a sad loss of life. So, give honor to whom honor is due. But it is not our purpose to give a record of the battles lost or won by the Texans. We more wished to detail the "first appearance" of Bright Eyes upon the stage of war; the main reason of his leaving his mother and betrothed bride to fight for the freedom of his adopted State. This glorious capture had fascinated him, and while there were similar events transpiring, he would not be content unless playing a part in the drama. He was never more to remain contented at home, pursuing the happy, peaceful life he had hitherto led. He determined to become a soldier of freedom.

During the ride to his house, together with Lone Star, the scout, he fully revealed his plan, and asked advice. As may be imagined, the scout confirmed this resolve, and promised to intercede with his mother.

We need not detail the meeting, or the arguments adduced by Lone Star. The result was as he had anticipated. The widowed mother yielded to her son's enthusiasm, who only heard her blessing. Little did he know of the agony of fear that was rending her heart, as she gave her only son to the cause of freedom. And brave Mattie, too. She cheered her boy-lover with words and smiles, while her heart throbbed as if it would burst.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE TOILS.

TOGETHER the two friends joined the army under Fannin and Bowie, Lone Star expressly stipulating that he was to be free and unrestrained, to go whither he willed. The commander was but too willing to accede to this proviso, for the fame of the Texan and scout had reached his ears, and his service in that line would be invaluable.

They participated in the affair of October 28th, at the Mission of Conception, where the victory gained by Fannin and Bowie has been styled the Bunker Hill of Texas. They were at the storming of the Alamo, where the glorious MILAM met his death.

We pass over the succeeding events until early in March of the succeeding year, when one incident occurred to Bright Eyes that was destined to be the cause of many strange adventures in which he was mixed, and scenes that he never forgot to the day of his death.

He was at Laredo, a town upon the Rio Grande, on secret duty, and one evening, finding that he could not sleep, he arose, and taking his side-arms strolled along the narrow, gloomy streets. He wandered aimlessly, not knowing or caring whither he went, lightly humming a snatch of some song, when he was suddenly startled by wild, piercing shrieks, as of some woman in distress.

Drawing his revolver, Dwight darted forward in the direction from whence the alarm sounded, without a thought of the danger he might be encountering or the number of foes he might have to deal with. He was in the outskirts, and the house was of a low, villainous description; a fit place for outrage and murder.

The shrieks were stilled, but he could still hear the sounds of oaths and scuffling. Then, as he turned the corner, his eyes fell upon a strange group. There were four persons in all standing erect, three men and a woman; while upon the

ground, lying motionless as if dead, was the form of a man, a Mexican, as the one glance showed him.

Bounding forward with a loud shout, Bright Eyes leveled his pistol and fired, the shot being answered by a groan and the heavy fall of one of the men. He drew trigger again, but the cap alone exploded, and the remaining two ruffians, looking around and only seeing one man, sprung forward to meet him while their long, dangerous-looking knives glittered in the faint moonlight. The woman fell across the body of the dead man, a coarse *savage* being tightly wound around her head and shoulders.

Nothing daunted, the youth fired one more shot, but being hastily aimed it merely knocked the broad *sombrero* from the man's head, and then they were upon him. A blow from his pistol-butt felled one, but the other robber, taking advantage of the opportunity offered, clasped the Texan round his body with a dexterous trip and jerk, and they fell side by side.

Bright Eyes had dropped his pistol in the fall, and seeing the threatened thrust of his antagonist's knife, he caught the hand and with a sudden jerk drove the back of it down upon the sharp rocks, bruising it severely. With a bitter oath of pain the Mexican dropped his knife, and before he could regain it, the youth, by a dexterous roll, had carried him beyond arm's-length of the weapon. Then they twined and writhed in the effort to get the upper position, but no sooner was this accomplished by one than the other would frustrate it, securing the position for himself.

There is no telling how the struggle might have ended had they been left to themselves, but the other actors now took their part in the tragedy. The head of the man who had run against the heavy pistol-butt must have been hard in look, for instead of being satisfied with the salute that might well have discomfited a veteran ram, he regained his feet, and seeing how the case stood, speedily regained his knife and rushed forward to put an end to the dispute. But the combatants were changing positions so rapidly that it was impossible for him to deliver a certain blow, and he crouched beside the antagonist, eagerly watching his chance.

His back was turned to the woman, and he was too greatly preoccupied, to notice her actions. Better for him if he had

She tore the muffling blanket from her face, and glanced hurriedly around. The moon now shone brightly, the fleecy cloud having passed from its face, and she could see that her rescuer was in a dangerous position.

Her Spanish blood was heated, and possessing herself of the knife, that was tightly clenched in the hand of him who had fallen before the advent of Dwight, she glided toward the waiting brigand, with a step as light and stealthy as a jaguar.

It was a wild, weird tableau then presented.

The two men lying upon the blood-stained ground, their limbs in constrained positions, the moonlight playing upon their distorted features. The two antagonists writhing and twisting in deadly embrace, each striving for the mastery. The dark, sinister-looking Mexican crouching near them, his long, dark hair floating over his shoulders, and partially concealing his face, with the glittering weapon in his half-raised right hand; while close behind him was the form of a beautiful girl, bending forward, to give sure effect to her blow, with a long, gleaming knife, tightly clenched in her tiny brown hand. Around them stood the low, filthy-looking hovels, dark and gloomy, as if deserted by their inmates, who were doubtless cowering affrighted in their beds, not knowing what moment a bullet might come whistling through the blinds, or their doors be burst open by the night-brawlers.

Then the scene changed as if by magic.

The woman's—or girl's, for in age she was nothing more—and swiftly descended, the knife hissing through the air, and plunging deep between the brawny shoulders of the robber. He fell forward with a wild cry that startled his comrade, who for a moment relaxed his struggles. That pause was fatal to him, for Bright Eyes half-rose over his form, and whipping her heavy bowie-knife from its sheath, he drove it through the ruffian's heart.

Then the youth arose, and gazed in wonderment at his unexpected assistant, while she returned the look with equal interest. Admiration, too, was plainly shown, and no wonder. They were both of uncommon beauty, although of two distinct types: one a brunette, the other a blonde; and this contrast that each beheld in the other, enhanced the fascination.

I fear our Mattie's heart would have been but ill at ease,

could she have seen her lover's look of undisguised admiration at his strangely-made acquaintance.

"Pardon me, señorita, for my neglect in not asking before," apologized Ives, in Spanish. "Are you injured by those scoundrels?"

"No further than a little smothering. But my brother—yonder—I fear he is killed!"

And she hastened to the side of the man, who had but one arm, as Bright Eyes now saw for the first time.

But her fears were not realized, and in a few moments he was able to stand erect, having been stunned from a blow with some hard instrument; while the knife-thrust meant to finish him had been turned aside by striking a rib, thus merely inflicting a flesh-wound, from which, however, the man had lost considerable blood. He appeared to be of a surly, unsocial disposition, and inspired the youth with a strange repugnance.

He would give no explanation of the attack, other than they had been taken by surprise. If there was a reason, other than the hope of plunder, he did not, or at least professed not to know it; and had it not been for the maiden, Bright Eyes could almost have wished he had let the thieves finish their job.

The brother—he appeared old enough to be her father—rude'y bade the girl follow him, and after a few muttered thanks upon his part, the trio separated. Parted, but not before the maiden had made an appointment for the succeeding day, in a whisper that met the ear of the man to whom it was addressed.

Then Bright Eyes went to his room and laid down, as a sensible person should do, but very foolishly rolled and tumbled over the bed, with a bewilderingly lovely picture dancing before his heated brain, that banished sleep for the remainder of the night.

Not to dwell, he fulfilled the appointment, not alone on that day, but upon the next, and the next, until from some cause she failed to come; and then the thought of his neglected duty bade him leave for the army.

During those clandestine meetings he learned that she was the sister of a Jarocho from the valley of Jalapa—the district famed throughout all Mexico for the beauty and grace of its women. What their object was in wandering thus far from

their homes, she would not tell. It was a secret of her brother's, she said, and that if she told, he would kill her.

When she told her name, Anita Montalado, Bright Eyes thought he had heard it before, but the more he puzzled his brains to recall when and how, the more indistinct it became, until he set it all down, to fancy.

There was one thing that he had learned from her which did not afford him as great joy as it might otherwise have done, had not the sweet, pretty face of Mattie Foster come before him. Still he experienced a sort of guilty pleasure when the lips of the beautiful Anita told him that he was the idol of her heart; that she loved him with all the ardor of her fiery, untamed soul.

The truth arose to his lips, but he did not speak it. The upturned face leaning against his breast might have tempted an anchorite, and between the wild kisses that he showered upon it, he vowed that he loved her, and her alone!

Ah, well, he was but a boy, and who among us with the like temptation but would have acted just the same. If the truth was told, we fear but few, very few indeed. Of course he intended to tell her better, at least so he said to himself when alone, but it was so pleasant, so sweet to be looked up to and adored by one of the "dear creatures," that when the time came it was—"the next time I'll tell her all."

And she left the place, forced away by her brother, with the fullest faith and confidence in him she had learned to love better than herself, better than life; and he said to himself that he was glad she was gone. But this very repetition was its denial, and Bright Eyes felt very miserable and discontented even while he vowed to himself he was hugely delighted at the thought of her having forgotten him so easily.

It was in this mood that he rejoined his comrades and returned to duty without paying a visit home, as he might easily have done had he felt so inclined. But his heart was not clear enough to meet Mattie as he had been wont to do.

He reached the "army" a few days before the disastrous battle, or rather series of battles that finally ended in the surrender of the entire force of Fannin. We do not intend describing this affair—the history of Texas tells it—only such events as relate to our characters.

On the 11th of March (some say the 12th) Captain King's company was sent to the Mission of Refugio, for the purpose of bringing up some families that were in danger. At the Mission, King encountered a large force of the enemy. Having taken refuge in the church, he dispatched a messenger to Fannin, detailing his perilous situation and asking assistance, while with his little band of *twenty-eight* men, he maintained his position against a large force of the Mexicans.

About midnight on the 12th the dispatch reached Goliad and Fannin immediately detailed Colonel Ward's battalion to go to their relief. Lone Star accompanied them as a guide, while Bright Eyes remained with his company. Thus it was that they became separated.

Little of moment occurred to the latter until the afternoon of the second day's fighting, the 19th of March, when the Texans had been forced to a stand on the prairie, from their ammunition-cart having broken down.

Colonel Fannin had just been severely wounded when the cry was raised that Santa Anna's pet soldiers—the "Tampico Permanent Regiment,"—was charging upon their left.

When at a convenient distance, they delivered a volley, and then charged with fixed bayonets. As soon as the smoke cleared away they were received with a fervor that mowed them down with tremendous slaughter. Their career being thus promptly checked, they contented themselves with falling down into the grass and occasionally rising up to fire; an example that was closely imitated by the Texans.

One group, particularly, upon the extreme left, had taken up their position behind some ant-hills and bushes, from whence, being upon a slight knoll, they inflicted considerable damage.

"Boys, this won't do. We must clear them out of that and the sooner it's done the better for us," said Bright Eyes to several men close to him. "Look! there goes Tom Whelan, shot through the head. That makes four! Come! who follows? I'm going to make those greasers pay big for this," he added, bitterly, for the man last killed had been a particular friend of his, having grown up together from boyhood.

"All of us! Lead the way," was the reply, and the mass glided after Dwight, who cautiously crept through the grass.

meaning to skirt the position and thus get upon equal terms with the Mexican sharpshooters, who still kept up their galling fire, not noting the maneuver.

But if they did not, others did. In a few minutes, the Texans had gained the desired position, and drawing bead upon the devoted marksmen, who were fully revealed to them, the whisper ran round :

"All ready?" and then came the united report, each man dropping his mark with as much skill and coolness as they would have shown while duck-shooting.

It was a terrible surprise for the survivors, who, deeming themselves surrounded, dropped their guns and fled toward the main body. One by one they dropped in their tracks, as the Texan riflemen picked them off, and not one of that little band lived to see the sunset.

Our friends did not note this, for their hands were full—ay, full to overflowing. The eyes that had detected their maneuver belonged to a band of irregular troops, or, rather, *regular* guerrillas, and the stalkers were being stalked—the hunters hunted.

Before the smoke cleared away, a rattling volley was poured into their little party; but, from the Mexicans aiming too high—as they almost invariably did—only three of the eight were slain, and two wounded, but not so as to disable them. Bright Eyes was crossed under the left arm.

That they were startled, may well be imagined; but not dismayed.

The enemy charged upon them, but they, in obedience to a cry from Ives, dropped their guns and scattered in the tall grass, drawing their revolvers, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. The guerrillas, not perceiving this action, which was made while yet the smoke lay between them, rushed forward to make sure of their prey.

But they were speedily undeceived, if they thought their work was done, for the deadly revolvers began to play rapidly upon their ranks at close quarters, so that almost every shot found its victim. But, knowing their superiority in numbers, they rallied, and dashed at the daring men, or, rather, youths, for they were but little more, in age, at least.

Then the revolvers were emptied, but instead of fleeing, the

Texans drew their knives and met them bravely. But numbers told, and one by one they fell.

Three guerrillas rushed at Bright Eyes, and with his last bullet he brought one to the ground, giving his death-shriek; then hurled the now-useless pistol at the others. It was adroitly dodged, and then the foremost leveled a downright swinging blow with his sword at the youth, who leaped aside, while the force of his stroke brought the Mexican to his hands and knees.

Avoiding the other's rush, Bright Eyes made a nimble bound, and alighting, striking out his feet violently, fell upon the neck of the prostrate man, driving his face with terrible force against the hard ground. Then parrying another stroke with his bowie-knife, he leaped inside the Mexican's guard, when, after a short struggle, they both fell to the ground, the Texan on top, and with his knee on the stomach of his foe. Then he raised his weapon to put an end to the strife.

Meanwhile the Texan riflemen had witnessed the unequal conflict, and a number of them darted forward to assist their comrades.

The Mexican leaped upon by the youth, struggled to his feet, and dashing the dirt and blood from his eyes, saw the critical position of his comrade, and that the remainder of his party were fleeing in hot haste. What for, he did not wait to see, but pulling his sword from the ground that it had entered when he fell, he leaped forward to the rear of his enemy.

The bowie-knife descended; at the same time the crack of several rifles were heard. The sword was elevated, but ere the threatened blow fell, its wielder dropped to the ground, riddled with balls. Still the weapon struck Bright Eyes, and the point, from its own weight, pierced his shoulder, inflicting a painful wound.

Amazed at his narrow escape when he thought his fate was sealed, the youth joined his comrades, who retreated to their former position, bearing with them the body of one man, who had escaped with several wounds, only to be slaughtered with the majority of his comrades, a week later.

Nothing particularly interesting occurred to our friend,

alone, and on the next day Fannin surrendered his entire force, and Bright Eyes, together with all who were not too badly wounded to bear removal, were conducted into Goliad, where they were put into confinement, and where we must leave him, for the time being.

CHAPTER V.

LONE STAR AT THE MISSION.

THE rescuing party under Colonel Ward, consisting of about one hundred men, guided by Lone Star, arrived at the Mission del Refugio on the afternoon of the 13th March, and found that the Texans had taken refuge in the ruins of an old stone church, where they were invested by a large force of the Mexicans. A single volley from the rifles of the relieving party served to drive off the enemy, who hastily retreated across the river.

Having marched during the day, over twenty-five miles, most of the distance in swampy prairie, with the mud and water ankle-deep, they were too greatly fatigued to think of returning that same night. Thus the golden opportunity was lost, for had they done so, the fate of their comrades would have been, probably, far different, not to speak of their own.

Orders were given for the men to be in readiness to commence their return march at daybreak the next morning, and after posting the necessary sentinels, the men were permitted to sleep upon their arms.

At sunrise in the morning, Lone Star was seen rapidly approaching from above the Mission, in great apparent excitement. Ward pressed forward and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing, except that we will have the pleasure of fighting our way back to Goliad," was the alarming reply.

"Speak out, man. What did you see or hear?" impatiently demanded the officer.

"Just this. I couldn't sleep sound, and so I went out on a little scout just before day. Went up the stream a little ways,

and almost ran into a crowd of greasers that were crossing the river from the other side. But I managed to dodge back, and ran here for fear you would start, not knowing what was up. If I had had more time I could have found out how many they numbered," rapidly detailed the scout.

"This is bad news; but are you certain there is no mistake?"

"Certain! haven't I got two eyes in my head, and do I walk in my sleep? Of course I am certain!" indignantly retorted Lone Star.

"Captain King, you will advance with your company and reconnoiter. If you see the enemy, retreat. Do not engage them, whatever they may be. Hasten back," ordered the captain, and the men detailed for the duty marched forth.

In a few minutes rapid firing was heard in the direction they had proceeded, and it was plain to all that they had been surprised. The order was given and the main body immediately pressed forward to the relief of the advance. But they had not proceeded a quarter of a mile when they were met in front by a body of five or six hundred Mexicans. At the same instant Lone Star called out:

"Look yonder! Back to the church, boys, or we're gone!"

In truth their position was precarious in the extreme, and becoming momentarily more so. There was a strong body of cavalry moving at some distance upon their flank, evidently intending to fall upon their rear while engaged with the enemy in front, and then cut off their retreat to the Mission. A moment's deliberation determined them to retreat again to the church, and by reserving their fire they kept the enemy at bay, reaching the walls in safety and without loss.

The men were promptly stationed at every available point, after the entrances were all blockaded with the images, pews, and benches, for they had but little doubt of having to stand an assault, as the enemy so greatly outnumbered them.

On three sides of the church there was nothing to cover the approach of the Mexicans, and in making the assault they must expose themselves to the deadly aim of the garrison the moment they came within rifle-shot.

On the fourth side was the churchyard of some fifty yards in length, and walled in. From the entrance end of this the

ground sloped downward for some distance. This would cover the approach of the enemy until it became necessary to scale the wall, while then the bushes and tombstones within the yard would still partially cover them in a nearer approach to the walls of the church.

"Colonel," said the scout, addressing Ward, "come here. Look at yon fence. That must be guarded, or else they will play the devil with us. If they are smart they will attack in the 'clear,' and while keeping us busy in that direction, throw a lot of greasers over that fence. Then a grand charge would make these rains too hot to be anyways comfortable."

"You are right. That must be looked to," hastily rejoined the officer.

"Give me some men—a handful—and I'll engage to keep the wall as long as you do the church," was the quick reply.

"You shall have them. Take Bullock's company; they have no commissioned officer," and he hastily issued the necessary orders.

With his little band of thirty-four men, Lone Star led the way to their perilous position, and reached it without being discovered by the Mexicans. The little band of brothers, as they were called, calmly awaited the attack. But two among them—their leader and an old Indian fighter, West Cramer—were men in years; the others were mere striplings in appearance, most of them being under the age of eighteen. But what they lacked in years they amply made up in bravery and skill.

The enemy were now strongly reinforced, numbering over thirteen hundred, including the cavalry, against less than one hundred men. At about eight o'clock the signal was given and they advanced to the assault from all points of the building at the same instant. Upon the uninclosed sides the enemy opened fire at a very short distance.

But those screened by the churchyard wall, marched slowly and silently, having thought of the same plan already mentioned by the scout. They approached in close column, intending to draw up to the wall unperceived and spring upon the prey from the yard when he was hard pressed by their comrades, and wholly unaided from that quarter. But they were doomed to bitter disappointment.

Colonel Ward had instructed his men not to hazard a doubtful shot, but that every one should reserve his fire until sure of his aim ; and he was obeyed to the very letter. At the first discharge of rifles from the building as many Mexicans hit the dust. This produced some confusion in their ranks, and a few hastily retreated, but others more brave or experienced, recovered and made a desperate rush toward the building.

But the momentary delay was of incalculable advantage to the besieged, and their arms were quickly reloaded, and then one by one or in an irregular volley their rifles cracked, and at every whiplike report an enemy dropped in his tracks, dead or mortally wounded. The foremost ranks were cut down, and then quailing before the withering fire, the survivors turned and fled precipitately, followed by a clear exultant cheer from the Texans.

Meanwhile the contest had commenced upon the side of the yard. The Mexican columns in close ranks had pressed forward at a double-quick as soon as the firing had commenced upon the other quarters. The little band still concealed from their view behind the wall, were in readiness with rifles cocked, and only awaited the signal of their leader.

"Ready, boys, but wait until I fire. Then pick your man and let the yellow-bellies have it. When they pass yon mezquite bush I'll pink the leader. Then fire," hastily uttered Lone Star, mentioning a clump of bushes at about eighty yards' distance.

The designated point was reached—passed—and then the scout's rifle spoke and his target fell without a groan, struck full between the eyes with the fatal missile. Then a sheet of flame-tinged smoke swept over the crest of the wall and revealed the ambush.

Several of the front ranks fell, almost in a body, as many, perhaps from surprise as the bullets. The others fell back a few yards, but a farther retreat was stopped by the efforts of a few brave officers.

The columns now deployed, under a constant dropping fire from the little band of brothers, and detachments from the two wings advanced to attack in flank, while the center once more moved forward in front. Lone Star and his comrades stood undaunted, pouring quick and deadly volleys upon the front,

regardless of the threatened attack upon the flanks, with the exception of one or two glances, that the scout did not fail to notice.

"Never mind them, boys, whip these in front first. Our friends in the church will attend to them."

"Whoop-ee!" yelled the old Texan, as he brought down another Mexican, then dropping the butt of his long "Hawkins" to the ground and reloading it with amazing rapidity, he added:

"Hain't this fun, Lone? Dog my cats of 'tain't better 'n fighting rats, only a feller can't raise the topknots."

"I ask no better if it only lasts long enough," said Starr, slipping a cartridge in place and springing back the barrel.

"I don't know,"—from a lad scarcely fifteen—"it's sport enough, but it looks almost too much like murder for *me*," at the same time picking off his man with as great *nonchalance* as though he were shooting prairie-chickens.

"Wait until you have as bitter cause for hating the cowardly devils as I have, and then you will know how sweet it is to hear them give their death-yell, and feel that it is your hand that brings it forth," grimly returned the scout.

The garrison in the building having so successfully disposed of their own assailants, were now at full leisure to assist their daring comrades in the yard, and noting the flankers, who in a few moments more would have gained the desired position, when nothing could have saved the little band of brothers from instant annihilation, opened a deadly fusillade upon them.

They were thrown into great confusion, and being unrestrained by the presence or influence of any superior officer, they threw down their arms and fled like a herd of frightened deer, not pausing until far beyond rifle range.

"But look," continued the youth who had before spoken, after a slight pause, during which they had beaten back a desperate onslaught, "see the poor devils lying there by the dozens, and hear them groan. By my soul, it looks like butchery!"

"An' what ye talk that away, young feller, jest look to him. See those two pore boys; I opine ye know 'em. What'll *their* friends think when they hyars 'at they're wiped out? *His* mother is a lone widder, an' he's her last cub. Hain't these two worth a thousan' o' them cursed greasers? Yaa, an' *ten*

thousan, ef you come to that. Bah ! you're a fool, boy," hotly returned Cramer, and he turned to where the youth had stood.

He was lying upon the ground, insensible, with the blood gurgling from a ghastly wound in the neck, where a ball had struck him. The old man stooped over him and felt for his heart, fearing lest he was dead. It throbbed feebly, and the boy opened his eyes and smiled faintly. His hand crept along and clasped that of his old friend, and the smile played lightly around his pallid lips.

" Ah, my poor boy ! they've doctored you, an' the last words I spoke was in anger, like ! Say you'll forgit 'em, Fred ; don't go under 'thout tellin' me that. I'd feel like bitin' my ol' fool tongue out ef you did. You're the on'y one I've got to cotton to now, sence the reds wiped out my own chicks. Oh, Fred, I loved ye, I did, an' it'll break my heart ef you goes under," cried the rough old borderer, while the great, scalding tears trickled down his hairy face and wet the hand he was holding.

" Never mind, daddy," replied the boy, affectionately smiling, though the effort of speaking cost him considerable pain. " I ain't gone yet. We'll have many another hunt together. Forget your words, as I have done ; they were all right."

" Be you shore, Fred—sartin shore ?" cried the Texan, eagerly.

" Yes. Put some—something in the hole to—stop—" and he fainted away.

West Cramer pressed some fine moss into the orifice, and then he was forced to leave the youth to help repel an unusually desperate charge of the Mexicans, in front of the stone wall. It was fiercely obstinate, and it seemed for a minute as though the enemy would be successful. But then the deadly withering fire of the Texans with their revolvers, cowed them and breaking ranks, they fled in utter confusion.

They were not pursued. Such an act would be worse than folly, but a wild, ringing cheer went up from that little " band of brothers," joined by the exultant voices of those within the ruined building, that must have tingled in the ears of their repulsed foe.

They thought that the battle was over, or at least that they

would remain unmolested during the remainder of the day, as they had inflicted most terrible loss upon the enemy. But in this expectation they were mistaken. The pride of the Mexican officers, many of whom had been long in service, was excessively wounded by the failure of their repeated assaults, which, in view of the great inequality in numbers, would be considered disgraceful to the Mexican arms.

Their loss in killed and wounded during the first assault had been over two hundred; yet it was followed up in two hours by a second, no less determined, but with the same result while the Texans suffered no loss whatever, the three wounded youths at the churchyard wall being their entire loss during the day.

This was succeeded, in the course of the day, by a third attempt to dislodge the hundred volunteers from their crazy walls, but with far less vigor than at first, and with as little success; but with less loss in their own ranks. This fact was owing to the Texans' finding that their ammunition was nearly expended, which, with all their care in husbanding it, would not have held out through the last attack had it been as vigorous as at first.

Night now coming on, the Mexicans, after posting sentinels around the Mission, in order to prevent the escape of the besieged and unserved, retired to their camp, distant only five or six hundred yards. Knowing that did they remain where they were, the next struggle would be fatal, Colonel Ward held a council with his officers, when it was determined to retreat during the night, and preparations were made for an immediate march.

But there was one sad, heart rending duty that they had to perform first, and this was to take a last farewell of their wounded comrades. They had no means of taking them along, even had they been able to bear removal. They must be abandoned to the mercy of their foes.

Several, among whom were Lone Star and West Cranner, declared that they would not desert them, but stay and share their fate. This was objected to, by none more earnestly than the three heroes themselves, who finally convinced them that it would be worse than vain for them to remain.

"There is only one thing that you can do dear old daddy,"

whispered Fred Morton, "besides saying good-by. And that is to get us some water; can you? We are almost perishing for a drink."

"*Can I?*" "Yas, boy, you shed hev it, ef all the devils o' h—l stood atween us an' the spring! Men, you hyar? Who'll go 'long o' me fer water fer the boys?"

He was answered in deeds, not words, and as one man they rushed toward the spring, some four hundred yards distant around which had been posted a strong guard of Mexicans twice their number. After exchanging a volley, the Mexicans left them in possession. Each filled his canteen or gourd, and after stripping the blankets from the four guards that had been killed, they returned unhurt to their companions.

One by one they took their last farewell, and wrapping their dying comrades up in the blankets, filed from the building with grief at each heart and tear-dimmed eyes, to behold them no more in life.

They tramped steadily on, and passed the sentinels without alarm, although they must have been seen; with arms in readiness to repel any attack that might be made upon them. **But they were unmolested.**

Perhaps their foes were only too glad to get rid of them upon such easy terms; perhaps this maneuver was just what they desired the most, and were even then chuckling in their sleeves at the sight of their terrible foe walking directly into the trap. *Quièn sabe?*

The old Indian-fighter, West Cramer, was the last one to leave the Mission-house, and when he overtook the party, Lone Star fell back and joined him. The scout knew his almost fierce love for Fred Morton, whom they had been forced to leave behind—the boy who affectionately termed him "old daddy," although in reality there was no bond of blood between them; and in a few well-chosen words tried to console the old man, mentioning the word "revenge."

"Thar it is, by the 'tarnal! I knowed thar war somethin' I'd orter b'in thinkin' about, an' you've hit it. I've hunted red-skins, 'cause they rubbed out my fam'ly, an' now I'll hunt yaller-bellies for Fred's sake. By all that's good—by them what's gone, thet I loved better'n my ol' karkil' e, a damned sight, I sw'ar never to spar' a Mexikin' as long's I can crawl! Lone

Star, you're a man, an' I ax you to witness my words. Ef I goes back on em, chaw me, will you?"

"Yes, yes, old man," returned the scout, soothingly, for he feared, from Cramer's wild words that this last blow had crazed his already unsettled brain, "and here's one that's with you in any and every thing. I've had fearful cause to hate the whole race; far more than you," added he, in the hoarse, constrained voice that he ever used when alluding to the murder of his family.

"That's good, so far, but why not begin *now*? Hyar we be a trampeosing jost the other way, 'stead of goin' whar we kin do smkthin'. Let's slide, on our own hook," urged the borderer.

"I have a good mind to, but hate to leave the boys," hesitated Lone Star.

"What's that, my man?" asked Colonel Ward, having fallen back to the rear and overhearing the last remark.

"Just this, boss. One o' them fellers 'at we left was my boy, lastwise it 'pears 's if he was, so Lone Star an me' wants to go back an' see it out. Ef he's dead, then we'll hev some more fun pluggin' greasers," hastily explained Cramer.

"Why, that is rank folly, man. You'd be killed to a dead certainty, before an hour," exclaimed the astonished officer.

"Mebbe not—'tany rate we'll risk it. We can't do no good lyar; that's plenty as knows the lay as well as we do."

"Of course, if you are determined to go, I can say nothing against it. You are unattached and not under my orders. But I would advise you to stay."

"Much 'bliged for your kindness, but I reckon we'll go. Ef we goes an'er, why 'tain't much matter nohow, but ef we come out right side up, why you'll see me ag'in," said the old man, warmly clasping the proffered hand.

"I believe he's right, Colonel Ward. We've got a heavy debt to pay, and can't afford to lose a chance," added Lone Star.

"I understand, and will not try to keep you back. But let me thank you for what you have done for us. I believe if it had not been for you, we would have run into that ambush this morning, and lost every man not to mention the good services you two rendered in the yard," warmly replied Colonel Ward, shaking the scout's hand.

"Much obliged for your kind words, but it's like getting paid twice over, to be thanked for doing the most pleasant thing I could find," and then with a word of parting the two scouts separated from the main body and took up a round-about course back to the Missouri.

CHAPTER VI.

BRIGHT EYES RECEIVES A VISITOR.

A short time after Bright Eyes entered Goliad as a prisoner he was removed from the room in which he had been confined together with a number of his unfortunate countrymen, and placed in a small cell by himself. Why this was done, or at whose orders, he knew not, and all his inquiries of the villainous, hangdog-looking fellow who brought him his scanty supply of food and water, were only answered by a scowl or bitter curse, and with this he was forced to be content, for he saw but the one person.

As may be imagined, the hours dragged heavily enough with him, and at times he feared he would go crazy when he thought of his mother and Mattie, and of the terrible grief and suspense they would endure regarding his fate. Perhaps they mourned him as dead, for he knew not of one man who escaped to tell the sad tale. And even if there had, would he know: who were killed or only taken prisoners?

At times he wept freely, when the picture of his once happy home and its occupants presented itself before his mind's eye. He could think of Mattie now, in his trouble, and his love for her seemed strengthened and purified. Why, he could not tell. Perhaps he did not try.

Only once during the first few days did he think of the beautiful maiden whom he befriended at Loredo—of Anita Montalado—who had so bewitched him by her charms; and avowing her passionate love for him, had made him speak the words that must prove him either false to her or the one who was his promised bride. Yes, that's what he called it—he

witched. Perhaps it was; but if so, only the witchery of a dark, love-lit eye and entrancing lips that syllabled the words, acting upon the native self-conceit and vanity of a handsome, impressible youth.

But that was past now, he said. He affirmed that he must have been blind to compare her for a moment to sweet Mattie Foster, and at the same time really believed he was sincere. Thinking thus he walked to the small window and looked forth, more from a desire to breathe the fresh air than curiosity.

Three steps carried him across the room, it was so small. It was bare, with the exception of a handful of hay and an earthen water-jar. Nothing else. The walls of rough stone were covered with strange figures and hieroglyphics, scraps of songs, names and the like, written in several languages and with the rudest materials—a bit of charcoal, a splinter of stone or a nail. Bright Eyes had passed many hours in deciphering them, and in scratching his name, together with the date and manner of his capture.

But he did not notice them now. Something of more interest had attracted his attention from the outside, as he peered through the iron grating. This was the figure of a man, clad in a garly robe, evidently a Mexican. That alone would not have been noticed, but as the man moved on the prisoner saw that he had lost one arm—the left one. A fancy struck him, but he laughed at his folly. Were there not scores of one-armed men in the country?

Still he curiously—almost anxiously—watched the stranger. He fancied that he had seen him before, that he was the man whom he had rescued from the assassins. Even so; what then? What had he to hope from him? Was it probable that he would assist a prisoner, and that prisoner an enemy to his country? Not likely; was the answer to each question.

While Bright Eyes thought thus, the Mexican was slowly advancing along the open space in front of the jail, stopping every passer-by and appeared to be eagerly questioning them, but his face betokened his disappointment as he continued to draw nearer; and then he paused, a little to the left and in front of the window at which the eager youth was standing. Fearing he would come no closer and that the opportunity

might not occur again, Bright Eyes cautiously uttered, in a low tone, fearing lest he should alarm his jailer:

"¡Hola, señor!"

The man started and glanced about him as if alarmed by the sudden call, when the prisoner repeated it and thrust one hand through the grating, waving it to and fro, hoping thus to attract his attention. The signal was successful, and the Mexican cautiously advanced, thrusting his hand beneath his *serape*, as if anticipating treachery. But when he saw the face, plainly revealed by the rays of the sun, his suspicion changed to wonderment, and he advanced close to the aperture, exclaiming:

"Holy Mother of mercy! señor, why are you here? You are the one who saved us from those cursed rascals at Laredo?"

"Yes. I am a prisoner here, taken in the late battle, and I ask a favor of you. Will you grant it?" asked Bright Eyes, anxiously.

"Go on. I am listening. Speak low and excuse my turning my back. It is safer so," replied the Mexican, as he squatted down and coolly proceeded to roll up a fresh cigarette with his one hand, upon his knee.

"If you can bring me a piece of paper and pencil, so that I can write a line, telling my mother where I am, I will remain your debtor for life."

"You saved my life, and that of my sister, who is as dear to me as you are to your mother. No; that debt can never be repaid," said the Mexican, in a low, guarded tone.

"Then you will do this? If so, we will call it square," eagerly exclaimed Bright Eyes, in a tone louder than prudent.

"I will try. Look for me to-morrow at this hour. But hush! there comes a patrol."

And the man slowly moved away, not once looking back, and as the prisoner heard the heavy tramp of a squad of soldiers approaching, he drew back from the window, fearful lest their suspicions should be aroused.

A few words may be necessary, regarding the presence of the one-armed Jarocho and his sister, in Texas, when his lieutenant thought him at their mountain retreat, as he had told Lone Star, some months before; as also their object in making the journey.

It appears that Benito Martinez had become infatuated with Anita, and not being in any respect bashful, soon made her aware of this fact, having the approval of Montalado. But she rejected him, and having a will of her own, she had little difficulty in breaking down her brother's opposition, as he almost idolized her.

But still the guerrilla pressed his suit, and rather than alienate him by using harsh means, and fearing to leave Anita where she would be subject to his persecution during his—Montalado's—frequent absences, he sent her to Monterey, where an old aunt of theirs resided.

But a few days after the departure of Benito after Lone Star, he received word that the widow Zarate was dead, and immediately hastened to the city, taking with him a small band of trusty men, that he knew he could depend upon, with the intention of removing her to his mountain retreat.

While at Monterey, he heard of the threatened outbreak and knew that in all probability, Lone Star, his most deadly enemy, would join the Texan army, and very probably be either captured or killed. For Montalado, like the majority of his countrymen, thought that a month, at the very least, would suffice to crush the rebellious State.

For this reason he delayed his return, and shortly after the battle of Gonzales, he heard that several Texans had been captured and taken to Laredo. One of them corresponded precisely in description to his foe, and he hastened there to ascertain, taking Anita with him, and leaving his followers at some little distance from the city, lest they should be forced into the army.

As we know, he was disappointed, and the brother and sister started immediately upon their return. Being upon foot, they were attacked by several thieves, who knocked the Jarcho senseless by a pistol-blow, when Bright Eyes heard the alarm, and managed, with the help of Anita, to rob them of their expected prey. By dint of hard pleading, added to her brother's irascibility, she persuaded him to remain at the town. He did so for three days, and then, misled by another rumor, left the place.

Directly after the wholesale capture at the battle of the Prairie, he hastened to Goliad, still searching for his enemy.

There it was that he discovered Bright Eyes as narrated. In his astonishment at the discovery, he forgot to put the question as to whether the prisoner knew anything of Lone Star, as he doubtless would have done, but for the interruption of the guard. How he would have acted, when he learned that Bright Eyes was a very close friend of the man whom the Jarocho was hunting to his death, is doubtful.

On leaving the prison, Montalado hastened direct to where his sister was staying, and entering the room, he exclaimed:

"Sister, who do you think I have found?"

"Not *him*, surely?" she eagerly inquired, well knowing for whom he had been searching.

"Thousand devils! no. I only wish it was!" snarled the one-armed Jarocho, as he sunk into a chair. "No, it was a friend, one whom we are greatly indebted to, and if I mistake not, we can part repay it by helping him. Poor fellow, he needs it bad enough!" hastily uttered the Mexican, not noticing the sudden start and anxious look of his sister.

Hastily composing her features, when he turned toward her he suspected nothing. It was but natural for her to be somewhat perturbed.

"What is the matter—is he hurt?" Anita at length uttered.

And then he told her all, adding: "But I trust we can do more than he asks. At any rate, we will try."

"To set him free, do you mean?"

"Yes. It will be life for life then. In less than a week at most, the prisoners are to be led out and killed. So I learned to day from Pepe Larajo," said the Jarocho exultingly, his eyes glistening as though he wished he could be one of the instruments chosen to carry out the wholesale murder contemplated by *El Cijo* (the lame one) as Santa Anna was popularly named by those in whose service he had lost the leg that rendered the title eligible.

"But how can it be done?"

"By gold, perhaps. If not, then by force."

"By force?"

"Yes, but not what you think," replied the Jarocho, thoughtfully. "If there are not too many guards, I think it can be managed. Of course he must be disguised; then once outside the room he is safe."

"You think so, brother? Is there any thing I can do? If so, tell me."

"Perhaps—I don't know. But if I need you, you shall know. First I must find out how the ground lays, and then we will see what must be done," added the one armed Jarocho, as he resumed his hat and scap, once more directing his steps toward the prison where the young Texan was confined.

After the departure of the Mexican, Bright Eyes felt as though an enormous weight was lifted from his mind, for it he could but send a note to his mother, relieving her worst fears it would not seem so long to wait for either an exchange or parole. Little did he dream of the horrible plot even then formed for their murder, else his mind might have been still more perturbed.

The hours passed rapidly enough now, and he was astonished when the darkness closed in, and the twinkle of light could be seen in the town, through the grated air-hole. He could not sleep, and at early midnight he heard the noise of a rusty key being inserted in the lock, and then the bolt shot back with a sullen click.

He hastily caught up the heavy water pitcher, for he knew what was the meaning of the unusual disturbance. It was a clumsy weapon, but at any rate it would settle one assailant, if their purpose was evil. But he had little need to use it, for two men appeared at the opened door, the foremost bearing a lighted candle. As he stepped forward, the light revealed the not unhandsome features of the one armed Jarocho.

When the door was closed behind his nocturnal visitor, Bright Eyes eagerly advanced and whispered:

"Welcome, sister; have you got the pencil and paper?"

"I have not, my friend, but I have something better."

"How so—something better! What do you mean?" queried the youth, in wonder, not unmixed with disappointment.

"Yes, a great deal better, if I mistake not. In ten minutes you shall have your freedom, if you wish it," calmly replied the Jarocho, as he removed a flat bundle from beneath his blanket.

"If I wish it?" echoed the prisoner. "But you jest, surely. The guard at the door—you forget him?"

"No, he is blind. A handful of *onzas* cover his eyes. But come. We must be far away from here before day, or I would not give a *claco* for our chance. Put on this dress, quick. With it on, and once outside of this cursed hole, you are safe." hurriedly answered the Jarocho, as he opened the bundle, and spread upon the floor the dress of a Franciscan monk, complete, even to the large white felt hat.

Half bewildered, Bright Eyes donned the flowing blue gown, silken cord and girdle, with the aid of his visitor, who pulled the broad brim of the hat down to the youth's eyes; and then stepping back a pace, he pronounced the disguise perfect. Then whispering:

"Wait patiently for a minute. I must go and scuffle with the jailer. Do not be surprised if you hear a noise," and gently rapping at the door, he passed through as it was opened, leaving Bright Eyes wondering at the significant tone in which he spoke, and listening intently.

He heard a few murmurs, and then a dull thud, followed by a slight scuffle; when a few moments afterward the door opened, and the Jarocho motioned for him to follow. As he stepped forth, and his reverer paused to lock the door, he glanced around and saw the sentinel leaning against the wall, with the garments over his breast crimsoned with blood, that but too plainly revealed the cause of the noise he had heard. This he saw by the glimmer of the candle, before it was extinguished by the Mexican, who then propped the dead body up against the door, still retaining the prison keys.

"Why did you kill him? I thought you said he was friendly, or bribed?" whispered Bright Eyes.

"Bah! he was a dog. He would sell his mother for gold; why not his life? I paid him his demand, but changed his mind. The gold would be of more service to us than to him, so I took it back. He was a traitor to me, why not to others? He could easily have given the alarm, and had us both taken before we got clear of the house. Do you see? But come on; we are in danger here. Let us go."

And leading the way, they succeeded in gaining the street unmolested.

Then Montalado hastened to the house where his sister was impatiently awaiting their arrival, and entered the room.

Bright Eyes was warned by a quick glance to be cautious, and he contented himself with kissing the hand that was extended, instead of following his first impulse, and clasping her to his heart.

"And now, Anita, you must be going. Do as I have said, and take all but the three I mentioned. They must remain with me, and the others will be sufficient to guard you and our friend."

"But where are you going?" asked Ives, not a little astonished.

"To a place of safety. Of course you can not remain here. If you did, or ventured out alone, you would be retaken, and then—you can guess the rest. Every point around here is occupied by our troops, and you could not walk a mile without meeting them."

"But my mother—I must go to her. She does not know whether I am alive or dead," persisted Bright Eyes.

"I tell you it is impossible! If you were dark-complexioned it might be done, as you speak our language. But if you wish, give me a note, telling her that you will return in a week at furthest, and I will see that she gets it."

"Well, if I must, I must, I suppose," added Bright Eyes, as he sat down to the table to do as directed.

But if the truth must be told, had it been Montalado alone that advised him, the point would not have been conceded so easily. Still, it would be but a few days longer, and as he caught Anita's wistful look, he determined to comply, especially as it was in her care that he was to remain. The fascination that had been broken, as he thought, during the lonesome hours in the prison-cell, was renewed in all its force, and once more he was undecided as to which he loved the best, Anita or Maria.

And although, as in duty bound, he sent his love to the latter, his mind was dwelling far more upon the charms of the Jaroch's sister. The note was hastily sealed, as if fearful she would divine what he had written, and thus learn his falseness to her. Truly, he was not greatly to be envied, or, as we fear the reader will say, respected.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

WELL, old man, what do you intend doing first?" said Lone Star to Cramer, a short time after they had parted from the retreating band of Texans.

"I hain't think much about it, 'cept this: I'm goin' to hev a look at the boys as we left behind, ef they's alive; ef not then at what's left on 'em," replied West.

"I don't see what good that will do. We couldn't help them if alive, and to see them dead won't better us any."

"But I *must* go! Ef you'll go too, why, I'll be glad, but ef not, then I can try it alone. Arter *that*, you can be boss, an' I'll be governed by what you say."

"Very well, then. But remember, there must be no powder burned by us. At least not before we can lift a horse apiece."

"Wagh! don't I know it? I'm old, an' some w'u'd say not much a'count, but I'm goin' to hev pay fer poor Fred afore I peg out; now you mark it!" gritted the old scout, as they rapidly glided along through the dense gloom, with bent heads, peering keenly before them, lest unawares they should run into the enemy.

As they drew nearer the Mission, they slackened their pace, and advanced with increased caution. Presently they caught sight of the huge, ungainly pile, as it loomed up against the sky, although at some distance, while the lights that twinkled through the windows and fissures in the rude stone walls, told them that it was occupied, most probably by the enemy they had fought so long and well.

They sunk prostrate upon the ground, and crawled along like serpents, when Cramer, who was slightly in advance, uttered a faint hiss, and flattened his form to the ground. In this action he was imitated by Lone Star, whose keen sense of hearing had also caught the suspicious sound. It was the tramp of a sentinel approaching them, but he was only keeping his beat, and had no suspicion of the deadly enemies who

were so near. His own voice told that, for he was lightly humming the words of a war-song.

He passed within ten feet of them, but all unconscious of their presence, and when at a little distance, uttered the usual cry of "*centinela alerta!*" and abruptly turned, as if at the end of his patrol. It was unlucky for him, and threatened to be equally so to the scouts, for in their impatience to reach the Mission-house, they began to advance, hoping to gain a safe distance before he could return.

But they knew by his cry that he had paused, and thinking his suspicions were aroused, remained motionless. They fancied they were discovered, and began cautiously preparing either for combat or flight, as should prove necessary. Then the sentinel approached them in a direct line, but he had commenced the refrain anew, thus showing our friends the error they had fallen into.

However, it was too late now to think of continuing their course, as the guard was so close that the first motion would betray them. Relinquishing his trailed rifle, Lone Star strained his muscles for a spring as soon as the Mexican should be within reach. If he continued his present course a dozen paces farther, he would stumble over their forms.

Two-thirds of that distance was traversed, the soldier's eyes looking beyond the spot where the scouts were crouching, not noting them in the dense gloom, when he uttered a low exclamation. Lone Star, in gathering himself up, had made a slight rustle that betrayed them. That was all; but one other sound came from the doomed sentinel's throat—the *death-rattle*.

For the powerful form of the scout shot forward like the panther on its leap, and with his long, sinewy fingers he clasped the man's throat and bore him back to the ground. The heavy musket was between them, and thus its jingle, that might otherwise have given the alarm, upon the hard ground, was deadened. Then West Cramer glided forward and pressed his long knife again and again to the hilt in the Mexican's breast.

"Take hold of his feet, old man, and let's carry him a little away from here, or else, when the guards are relieved, he may be found, and then this place would be too hot to hold us," whispered Lone Star.

This was done, and then recovering their rifles, they kept on

until the churchyard was reached, after making another narrow escape from discovery by a sentinel. Here they paused to ascertain if any Mexicans were posted in the inclosure, if possible. None could be seen, however, so the two scouts scaled the fence, dropping inside, and then slowly advanced, inch by inch, along the rough ground, thickly strewn with broken tombstones and stunted shrubbery. Lone Star once nearly fell into an excavated grave, from which the ghastly occupant had been removed, not seeing it for the vines and bushes that acted as a screen.

At length they secured a place from whence they could command a fair view of the church's interior. Lone Star took one glance and then, hurriedly drawing his comrade back, whispered:

"Come, let us go. There's nothing for you to see there."

"But the boy—whar is he?"

"Never mind. Come along and I will tell you my reasons as we go," persisted the younger scout.

"'Twon't do, pard, 'twon't do. That's somethin' in thar 'at you don't want me to see. Give way, an' let me look," said the old scout, using a louder tone than was prudent under the circumstances.

"Well, then, if you will do it, guard yourself. It is an awful sight, and one that will tear your heart-strings; but remember not to make a sound, if you wish to get revenge. If they discover us now we will go under, and then who'll pay them for what they've done to poor Fred?"

"Never you fear. I know what to expect now, an' my cleaver is strong enough to bar it, hows'ever ugly," was the reply, in a calm, still tone that proved the truth of the old borderer's words; and Lone Star made way for him.

Truly it was a horrible sight to gaze upon with a friend's eye, and know that he was powerless to avenge the dead at least for the present. But the old man never flinched, although his anxious companion could hear his clenched teeth grit indignantly together, as he looked.

On the blood-stained floor lay the dismembered and headless trunks of the three brave boys whom they had been forced to abandon, stripped of their clothing and horribly mutilated. Upon the altar the three heads were placed. One of them was

turned upside down, and a lighted candle stuck in the gory neck. Another lay with his face turned upward, with a taper thrust between its teeth.

But in the center stood that of Fred Morton. A hole had been pierced in the crown, and the stump of a hand placed in it. Then a tall wax candle was in the hand, a cord binding the fingers around it. In the flickering blaze that alternately cast the features in the faint or brilliant light, the sight was a truly fearful one.

But the soldiers gathered inside the building did not appear to so regard it. They were scattered in every position—some sleeping, others smoking, talking, or gathered together gambling; and occasionally some facetious remark would be made regarding their unique *candlesticks* that set the crowd in a general uproar. It was a wild, weird picture, that might have been taken from Danté's *Inferno*.

The old man stood motionless for a few minutes, when Lone Star touched him upon the arm and motioned him to follow. He did so without a word, but after a few paces, turned his head for one last look. Most unfortunately he stumbled over a stone and fell, his rifle striking with a metallic ring against a tombstone.

It was but too plain that the noise had been heard by those within the Mission-house, and that the alarm was given, for the sounds of trampling footsteps advanced and the lights flashed from side to side. To hesitate now was capture; and capture meant death. But Lone Star did not falter. It was in moments like this that his mind roused itself, and he acted as if by intuition. Danger neither alarmed nor confused him.

"Come now, I tell you, and all is safe. Hesitate, and we are lost," he whispered, as he grasped the other by the arm and glided forward to the bottom of the yard.

But he did not meditate flight, as the cordon of sentries were alarmed upon the prairie, and a passage as they had come would be impossible. The empty grave that he had stumbled across was the point that he aimed for. This was quickly reached, and Lone Star hurriedly directed his comrade to enter.

"But you go, too! There's room a-plenty for both on us."

"No. In with you. They know that somebody is in the

grounds, and unless I throw them off the scent, they'll soon un-
earth you."

"But you may git into a diffikilty."

"If I do, you could do me no good. Bat still! Pull the vines over you. They are coming—searching the ground with torches!"

"Ef I hyars a rampus, I'm with ye," and then Lone Star turned from the spot, by a *débar*, so as to draw observation away from where West Cramer was hidden.

The grounds adjacent to the building now swarmed with men, some carrying lighted candles to find the trail of those who had alarmed them, while the others crowded around them as if afraid to venture among the dark fantastic shapes that the broken tomb-stones had assumed. But there were some who had, upon the first alarm, spread around the entire building and yard, so that, should the spy attempt escape by flight, he must run directly into their hands.

The noise they had made in doing this had helped decide Lone Star in his present course of action. He knew that unless he should meet some one among the enemy who knew him well, that he was safe, as he had the appearance and dress of a Mexican ranchero, and spoke the language with the fluency of a native.

Upon the other hand, old West Cramer, if discovered, could hope for nothing but death. His red hair and beard, together with his dress, would alone betray him, and he knew but half a dozen words of Spanish, all of them being oaths.

When he had got well upon their flank, Lone Star crawled down behind a ruined tomb, and raising his voice, called out:

"Hallo, gentlemen!"

The answer was as he had anticipated, and a dozen muskets were discharged in the direction whence the voice had sounded; but the darkness, added to his breastwork, protected him. The reports were heard by the body of Mexicans encamped around the spring, and he could hear the hoarse shouts and commands, followed by the heavy, confused tramp of many feet, as they hastened to and fro, no doubt anticipating an immediate attack. Then he called out in tones of well-earned indignation:

"Thousand devils! comrades, are our forces so great, and

Texans so scarce that you must make a target of one of your own number?"

"Who comes?" was the hesitating challenge.

"A friend," he promptly replied, and then added, in a loud, clear tone, for the benefit of his comrade: "Thanks to my caution, I am safe and unhurt, else you would have been under the very disagreeable necessity of paying a good round sum for masses to be said for having murdered a friend and brother in arms. Now don't shoot again, and I will join you, so that you may see I am what I say."

Then as he added these words he boldly advanced toward the crowd, the foremost of whom as promptly fell back, as if yet doubtful whether it was not a ghost that had so suddenly addressed them. He was confronted by an officer, who eyed him keenly, and then asked:

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"Thunder! but you have a queer style. However, that is easy told. I am Don Diego Pelucho, at your service, and I came over here from the camp yonder, to have the honor of losing a few dollars to some illustrious señor, at a game of *naïf*," glibly lied Lone Star, in the bombastic tone peculiar to the middle class of Mexicans.

"Did you make a disturbance by the building yonder a short time ago?"

"Yes, I believe I did, or rather, my gun did for me. Holy Mother of mercy! who could help giving a start when they first caught sight of those miraculous candlesticks of yours yonder? Not poor I, I assure you! My gun drops and alarms you. I am not ready to be shot—as I have not confessed for a month—so I retreated. You know the rest. But see! you are good shots; an inch lower down and a padlock would have done me no good!" he added, as he pulled off his ~~undershirt~~ and thrust his finger through a hole that had been cut by a musket-ball, although done some hours before; but that fact he forgot to mention.

"You were alone, then?" queried the same officer who had spoken before.

"The devil, yes; excepting blessed San Giacomo, who in his goodness caused that cursed bullet to spare my head, although it spoiled my hat," returned Lone Star, dolefully.

"Well, then, if you wish it, come in. No doubt you will find plenty to accommodate you in regard to *pesos*—or, for that matter, I will play you myself."

"Pardon, señor, but I am a poor man, and I fear the sight yonder—blessed Virgin! and in a church too!—has unsteadied my hand, and I should stand but little chance 'gainst such an admirable player as your excellency; and I would not wish to weary you. But I thank you for the proffered honor," replied Don Diego Pelucho, with a most exquisite bow and smile.

"Then you decline?" said the officer, in a disappointed tone.

"Perforce; my purse will not allow me the pleasure. But if your excellency desires to open a 'bank,' I can persuade friends, I think, to come over, and together we will make up a little game."

"Capital! Just the thing, if you will be so kind, Señor Don Pelucho," cried the delighted gambler.

The messenger who had been dispatched to the spring with an explanation of the alarm, now returned, and after a few more compliments, Lone Star parted from the Mexicans and started toward the spring. But when once out of sight he dropped to the ground and thoroughly reconnoitered the space adjoining the churchyard, and when he was fully satisfied that none but the regular sentries were around, he once more scaled the wall and made his way toward the hiding-place of West Cramer.

Sounding their usual signal, he was gratified by hearing it answered from the grave, and gaining the edge he called the old man by name, mentioning his own so that he would have no hesitation about revealing himself. The head of the t.d. borderer was thrust from the hole, and with a little help he emerged entirely from his novel hiding place, and together the two scouts made their way out into the open prairie, from the inclosure.

"Didn't I do that up slick, old man?" asked Lone Star, a little exultingly.

"Durned ef I know, you talked so much in that cussed jabberish. But I thought ye was a goner when them thundersmugs banged away, an' out I scratched, fer I knowed

they'd soon smell me out anyhow, an' war jest a-goin' in fer all I's worth, when I hard you speak ag'in. Then back I slides an' stayed till you come."

Lone Star then explained how he had pulled the wool over the Mexicans' eyes, and added:

"Now, what I move is this: They've got plenty of horses, and I never care to walk when I can ride. I say, let's lift a couple of animals and then leave, with our compliments to the greasers."

"I'm with you thar, but I must hev one more pop at a yaller-belly afore we mosey, for poor Fred's sake."

"Exactly, that's just what I meant. That sight yonder was enough to make an angel swear vengeance on the whole cursed tribe!" he added, bitterly.

"Wal, I ain't a nangel quite, as I knows on, but ef I don't make some oaten these yaller-bellies, it's 'cause they're bound *loser way*," grimly remarked Cramer.

Then all conversation was dropped, for they were drawing near the camp, and great precaution was necessary to avoid discovery. They were inside the cordon of sentinels, and knew that, were their true character discovered, on foot, as they were, there was but slight chance of escaping with whole skins.

By scouting around, they finally learned the exact position of the horses, and to their surprise saw that they were already saddled and bridled, prepared for the road. This was unexpected, and although by it they had gained the caparisons, the increased danger they would run from immediate pursuit more than counterbalanced that. It also told them that a movement was contemplated very soon, perhaps in pursuit of the retreating Texans.

In fact, they had wondered that this had not been done before. But they did not know how well formed were the plans of the Mexican commander, and that this pause was necessary to their full development.

However, they had little time to ponder upon the subject, for what they did must be done quickly. So they glided among the horses, which were left comparatively unguarded, and soon selecting two that gave promise of great speed and endurance, severed the picket-ropes, and cautiously led them from the herd,

which they finally succeeded in doing without raising an alarm or creating any disturbance among the animals.

A few moments sufficed to form their plans of operation, and the hoofs of their confiscated chargers were securely muffled with pieces cut from the scouts' clothing. Then they led them by a *détour* as near the line of guards as was prudent, and newly-capped their weapons.

Then they mounted, and slowly drove within short pistol-range of the Mexicans surrounding the spring. Their rifles were leveled, and as one report they rung out upon the still night-air, while their targets fell, to rise no more. The camp was all confusion, and their alarm was by no means lessened when the rapidly-discharged revolvers sent death and terror into the densely-crowded mass, who had flocked to a common center, no doubt fancying they were surrounded by the entire Texan army.

With wild, exultant yells the two daring scouts turned and sped away from the spot at the top of their horses' speed. A shot flashed in their faces, almost near enough to scorch the hair, and the blaze revealed the form of the sentinel who fired it. That was enough for Lone Star. A jerk upon the reins as his heels dug into the horse's flank, made the animal give a sideling leap, and true to the hand, its front hoofs struck the unfortunate soldier full in the breast, crushing the life out of his mangled body, and one more victim was added to those who had gone before, sacrificed to the manes of the scout's murdered kindred.

Then they dashed ahead, loading their weapons as they went, not knowing how soon they might be called into requisition. They left the scene of excitement behind them. The drums were beating to quarters, trumpets braying, the hurrying tramp of men, the loud, hoarse orders and jingle of weapons, were mingled with the neighing and snorting of affrighted horses.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JAROCHO'S RETREAT

"THERE, if you will deliver that, or have it left at the office in Matagorda, I will do as you may direct," added Bright Eyes, as he handed the superscribed note to the Jarocho, who took it and secured it within his jacket.

"Now, one question more, and we must part. Do you know, among your countrymen, any person called, I believe, *Lone Star*?" asked Montalado.

"Do I know him? Why he is—" began Bright Eyes, when fortunately he was interrupted by the Mexican.

"Was he with you at the Prairie, when you were taken prisoner?"

"No. He went with Ward to the Mission del Refugio."

"Then he is all right!" muttered the Mexican; adding to himself, "he must be a prisoner. They were all taken."

"But come, child; no time must be lost. Go with 'ñor Bright Eyes to the men, where I told you, and give Tiburon my orders. Tell him to cross above Remosa. You know the rest. My friend," turning to Bright Eyes, "you will go with my sister and do as she says, if you wish to escape. Keep your disguise, and if any one should meet you, do not speak a word, or upon any account show your face. Let the others do the talking."

"And you?"

"I will overtake you before long. I have yet a little more work to do before I can leave," returned the one-armed Jarocho, while a fierce scowl disfigured his features.

Then they parted, and Bright Eyes, still disguised as a Franciscan monk, followed the maiden's guidance, and in a very few moments cleared the outskirts of the town. The sentinels allowed them to pass unquestioned, the priestly garb being an unerring passport, although their chuckles told but too plainly that they had their own opinion as to the padre's object in

seeking the solitude of the plain; but the fugitives did not heed that.

A half-hour's rapid walk brought them near a small *mesquite*, and pausing, Anita gave the cry of the night-hawk, abruptly breaking off as though the bird had been alarmed. After a few moments' silence, the signal was answered from the wood, and stepping boldly forward, the girl reached the outskirts, when a low voice called:

"Who?"

"I; Anita Montalado."

"Is it the captain?"

"No, he is not here. I bring a friend, Tibaron, the one you expected. Come over here while I give you the captain's orders" and the two drew a little to one side, conversing earnestly, but in such low tones that Bright Eyes could not catch a word, although he could tell that he was the subject of conversation.

In a few moments horses were led out, and the youth saw that the party consisted of a full score of men, and that an animal was provided for his use. He hesitated to mount, at first, but a word and glance from Anita conquered his doubts of all being right, and then they rode at a rapid pace over the prairie.

His misgivings speedily vanished, as he rode along by the side of the maiden, with one little hand clasped in his, and yielding to the seductions of the moment, they conversed in whispers of love.

We do not intend detailing their long journey, although it was far from monotonous. For the first two or three days Bright Eyes made no particular inquiries as to their destination, being contented with the society of Anita, the Jaracho's sister. But when they reached the Rio Grande, he protested that he would go no further, as he saw they intended crossing the river. Anita glanced at Tibaron, who said:

"Señor Texan, I am deeply grieved, but we must cross here. The captain's orders must be obeyed, and he said we were not to leave you until he joined us."

"But he is not my captain, if he is yours. What if I say I will not go any further with you?" cried Bright Eyes.

"Then I should be compelled to bind you, and that course

would be as disagreeable to my feelings as to your honor," was the calm but firm reply.

"Well, that is rich—decidedly rich!" laughed the Texan. "Then I tell you—"

"It is but for a little while," interrupted Anita, pleadingly. "For my sake, do not resist; think what would become of me were you hurt."

"Well, for *you* I will go wherever you say; but remember, his promise extends only until we are rejoined by your brother," hesitated Bright Eyes.

"God preserve us! one would think I was the plague, you seem so anxious to get rid of me," pouted the beauty, and of course Bright Eyes could do no less than try to appease her, which, however, was not completed, until he vowed to remain until she bade him go.

After this dispute he made no further objections, and in due course of time, they reached the neighborhood of the Jarochos' retreat, or mountain home, arriving late in the afternoon. The road led by an exceedingly difficult trail along the face of a precipice, with barely width enough to allow the passage of one horseman at a time, and before they entered it, Anita insisted upon Bright Eyes being blindfolded; adding, that as he was unaccustomed to the sight, it would make him giddy, which would be almost equivalent to death.

He submitted, for he could see the narrow, winding ledge, with a yawning abyss beneath, of an immense depth, and knew that she was right. Then he was told to grasp the pommel of his saddle, but upon no account to touch the bridle reins, as his horse would traverse it in perfect safety if left to himself, but if guided, the danger would be far greater, as the beast would then lose his sense of independence.

At length the passage was traversed, and after signals being given and answered, the party debouched into a level plateau, surrounded by a dense fringe of trees within which were built a number of rude huts. To one of these, larger and far more pretentious than those surrounding, Anita led Bright Eyes, after dismounting and leaving their horses to be attended to by the guerrillas.

He was amazingly surprised at the comfort and even luxury with which the interior was fitted up, and his fair captor en-

joyed his wonder hugely, as she ordered a bath prepared, and clean garments furnished for him, to an old servant, who appeared at the clear tinkle of the silver hand-bell.

That same evening, Benito Martinez made his report to Anita, for although he had long returned from his ill-starred expedition after the Texan scout, he had not met Crespinio Mentalado or Anita before, from the cause before detailed.

As he told his story, his dark, sinister eyes roved from one to the other of his hearers; at one moment showing love, the next, hate. He knew that the handsome stranger was a Texan, and as if that was not enough to direct his enmity toward him, he quickly divined the relation in which Bright Eyes stood to the woman that he himself had chosen for his bride—that she loved this member of the hated race.

Bright Eyes was not at a loss to decipher the meaning of the bitter glances cast toward him by the gigantic guerrilla, and, fiery-tempered himself, returned them with interest. Intercepting a cross glance, Anita hastily said:

“Remember, ñer Martinez, that this gentleman is a guest of your chief, and any injury or insult put upon him will be punished by the captain as if it were shown to me. Please be so kind as to notify the band of this fact. Understand me?”

“I understand,” replied the Jarocho, as he bowed himself from her presence.

“Really, ñer Anita,” said Bright Eyes, laughingly, “you need not have been so cautious. If I mistake not, he worships at the same shrine I am proud to kneel before, and if so, not all the orders in the world will prevent him from trying to remove me. And if it must be so, better openly than a blow in the dark.”

“But he would kill you; he is very brave and strong. Since my brother lost his arm, not one of our band can match him.”

“Yes, he looks like a good man, but rather slow, I think. But if he shows the disposition, I shall not avoid him, and it may turn out different from what you think. *Quien sabe?*” said the youth, lightly. “But your brother. How did he lose his arm?—if I may ask,” he added, a little curiously, for he had become interested in the one-armed Jarocho, despite his almost rude address.

"Ah, that is a long story ; too long to tell now. Some other time, perhaps. But the same person did it that mutilated Benito Martinez, as you saw," replied Anita, with a shudder.

Bright Eyes started. He knew it all now—where he had heard the name Montalvo ; that his rescuer was the man who, with his hand, had so fearfully murdered the family of Lone Star. And she — ; but no, if even born, she must have been but an infant when it occurred. He could not believe that she knew the real cause of her brother's hatred for the Texan scout.

His agitation did not escape the maiden's notice, and she questioned him regarding it, but was diverted by some laughing remark. After awhile she left the room, and elated to be free, so that he could think over the strange events that had occurred at last, he left the building, and lighting a cigarette, slowly wandered through the little village, as it might with propriety be termed.

He did not think of the danger he might be running, or notice the glowering looks of hate and enmity that he encountered at every turn ; his thoughts were far away. The Jarochos knew that he was one of the race they had deadly come to hate ; for there were many present who had lost a relative, a father, brother, son, or at least a friend, either among the band of men who after Lone Star, or by his previous exploits.

But they knew that he was their Lily's guest, and feared the anger of Montalvo when he should return, too greatly, to make an overt attempt at vengeance. All but one — Benito Martinez. He had learned enough during his brief interview, to know that while the handsome Texan lived, his hopes of ever winning Anita Montalvo his bride, were worse than vain ; and he determined that his rival should die. But precisely when or in what manner, he had not yet decided.

It was with no such ill purpose that he approached Bright Eyes now, and passed directly in his path. The youth almost brushed him before he was aware of his presence, and then, before he knew who it was, politely raised his hat and bowed politely. But he was interrupted by a muttered sentence, that he did not fully understand. Something about *Yankee* *twice*, (Yankee *twice*) when he recognized Martinez. Thinking the Jarochos had stopped him to pick a quarrel, Bright Eyes de-

terminated not to avoid it, as he plainly saw that a contest must come sooner or later, and thought best to have the matter ended as soon as possible.

"Pardon, señor; did I understand you to say your name was *Beto*? If so, please tell me the meaning of it."

"*Cirajo*! who are you?" hissed the Jarocho, not replying to the taunt.

"My own master—and you?"

"You may find out who and what I am, before long. Why is a cursed Texan here, among men?"

"Where else should they be? Perhaps I came here to learn bravery and courtesy among the Jarochos. Can you tell where I can find one who has any to spare? Or perhaps you are ignorant what the words mean," fanning himself nonchalantly with his broad-brimmed hat.

"Thousand devils! more likely you were afraid of the *jues de letras*, (criminal judges) and left your country for fear you would be treated as you deserved," gritted the angry Mexican.

"If so, it was not because they were going to *creep my ears*," retorted Bright Eyes, keenly watching the other, for he knew not what moment his rage and jealousy would induce him to make an attack, hoping to take his rival by surprise, and at a blow, remove the man who had stepped in between him and the one he had selected for his bride.

And it was well that he was thus prudent, for at this last biting taunt, the Mexican jerked his glittering sword from his side, and with a wild howl of rage, plunged at the youth. With agile leap, Bright Eyes avoided the onset, and turning, his sword met that of his enemy, who had made another rush.

A word may not be amiss concerning the term, Jarocho. The peasants of the sea-coast around Vera Cruz are so termed, and not altogether from their being guerrillas, or bandits, as some imagine, although many are such. It is a *bad name*, borne by them from time immemorial. The abbreviations, *ñor* and *ña*, of Señor and Doña, are common in that section of the country.

It seemed an unequal fight, and such it was in reality, but not in the way that the spectators reasoned. The Jarochos know nothing of scientific fencing, with but very few excep-

tions, who have had better opportunities, but depend mainly upon mere agility and brute force for success, and Martinez was not an exception. On the other hand Bright Eyes had taken many a long lesson from Lone Star, who was unusually expert, and proved himself an apt pupil.

Thus the guerrilla expended his strength in vain, terrific blows that slid innocuously from the blade of his slighter antagonist, who contented himself with standing upon the defence. But he was watching for an opening, by which he could disable the sword-hand of his foe, as that they deem the most disgraceful defeat a man can undergo. The loss of life is considered far preferable.

The first clash of steel had brought several spectators to the scene, and their number increased every instant. Fortunately Timon Varlez had told them Bright Eyes was the esteemed friend of their chief, whom they both respected and feared. Added to this, Martinez was in bad odor among them from his fierce and overhearing temper; so they contented themselves with looking on.

Then Bright Eyes found the opportunity he had desired, and with an abrupt twist of his wrist, he laid open the back of Benito's hand, and at the same moment hurled the weapon from his grasp. Then he dropped the point of his sword and turned away toward the horse—an action that nearly cost him his life, for the mad-lane Jarocho plucked his long knife from its scabbard with his left hand, and leaping forward aimed a virious blow at the back of his foe.

It would have been as fatal as he had intended, had there been no interference. But this there was. Anita had been alarmed by the clash of steel, and finding the youth gone, instantly divined its cause. Grasping the first weapon she could find, she ran out to where the conflict was in progress. By the time she reached the spot it had ended, and she was just in time to note the dastardly attempt of the defeated man.

Her action was as quick as his, and as her arm straightened out, the flash and report of a pistol followed, and the Jarocho fell, shot through the brain; the knife, in its descent, slitting open the flowing shirt of the youth and scratching through the skin. Then she entered the circle, and placing one foot upon the body, looked around her for a moment before speaking.

"Friends, you see what this dog received for disobeying the order of his chief; and so will every one be served who does the same. The chief says that this man is his friend, because he saved our lives when we were helpless beneath the assassin's knife. He is not an enemy, he is a friend, who has come to live among us and become one of our band. I command you in your captain's name, to honor and trust him. Will you do it?" and she paused for a reply.

A loud shout, led by Tibaron Vandez, was the answer, and she knew that, owing to her prevarication, Bright Eyes need apprehend no further danger from them. She told Vandez, who was now second in rank, to dispose of the corpse, and after thanking the Jaroches, took the youth by the arm and led him into the house.

CHAPTER IX.

LONE STAR ON THE TRAIL.

AFTER continuing their rapid gait until they thought a sufficient distance had been placed between them and the enemy, the two scouts drew rein beside a clear stream, and prepared to spend the remaining hours before daylight with what comfort they could, feeling not a little weary after their day's work, having eaten nothing since dawn. But that could not be remembered now, and they soon forgot their trials in a sound sleep, that lasted until after the sun had risen.

Smoking a pipe of tobacco for breakfast, the two Texans started again, heading for Goliad, and were riding along merrily enough, not thinking of danger, when, as they turned a clump of trees, they found themselves almost in the midst of a large body of men. But a chance was needed to tell them what and who they were.

The gaily uniformed, the stacks of gayly pennoned horses, even the housings of the horses, told that they were Mexicans; and a mutual cry of surprise was uttered by both parties, while the scouts wheeled and put the timber between them and the enemy, before a shot could be discharged to stop their career.

A party of the lancers did not wait for orders, but leaped upon the waiting horses and spurred after the fugitives. Then it was a mere question of speed and endurance. The Texans watched the result for a few minutes with anxious eyes, for their lives depended upon the choice they had made in selecting their animals. But the smile gradually changed to a smile as they saw the stretch of greenward lengthen that separated them and their foes, and then their wild, taunting laughter floated over the prairie, serving as a spur to the lancers.

"Well, old man, we showed some sense and judgment in horse flesh, by selecting these brutes last night. We can ride all around these fellows," exclaimed Lone Star.

"Yas, we can out-strip 'em, an' durned ef we can't out-shoot 'em, too. I'm goin' to pick off a kupple o' the greasers, anyhow," declared West Cramer, as he unslung his rifle, that hung at the saddle-bow.

"It will be risky, partner, too much so, I'm afraid," slowly said Lone Star, shaking his head. "Every shot will throw us back, and if we once get within fair range of those blunder-busses, some one of the Lells will either take us or the animals, and then—"

"Darned ef I keer," muttered the old borderer. "I'm goin' to take one any way," and half-turning upon his saddle, he dropped his mark with as much certainty as though he was upon solid earth.

Once he smelt powder, Lone Star forgot his prudence, and the two scouts showed the Mexicans a specimen of rifle shooting such, perhaps, as they had never witnessed before. But still they were so much stronger in numbers, and eager to avenge the death of their comrades, they spurred on, getting a wonderful amount of speed from their animals by the aid of their long reins and merciless goads.

In their excitement, the scouts did not notice how greatly the distance between them had lessened, but were suddenly aware of it by the volley of musket-balls that landed nearly all around them. West Cramer gave a convulsive start and sank forward upon the neck of his horse, with a deep groan. Supporting him with one hand, Lone Star asked him where he was hurt, but he needed no answer.

The hot blood poured from a ghastly wound in his forehead,

that was nearly shot away, and he knew that he was dead—that the groan must have been the last breath of life going out.

He could do him no good by staying there, and would only share the same fate, so Lone Star urged on his horse, prying the point of his bowie-knife as a spur. A mile ahead of him, he saw a low line of underbrush, and knew it to be the confines of a swamp. That once reached, he could easily baffle all pursuit among its tangled recesses. Still, if he should do so, it would be a wonder, the leaden hail still hissing around him so rapidly as the clumsy carbines could be loaded and discharged.

The swamp was rapidly neared, and the fugitive thought he was safe, when a sharp pain in his left side told him that one, at least, of the missiles had found its mark. The blood poured forth freely, and for a moment he thought his race was run; but then the faintness passed away, and he beheld the friendly swamp within a hundred yards of him. Another report, and with a few wild, spasmodic bounds, his horse pitched headlong to the ground; but its rider had had sufficient warning, and alighted safely upon his feet.

Then he was off, while the triumphant yells from his pursuers told that they looked upon him as already their prey. Luckily for him, he glanced over his shoulder, and saw the dark coils of several lassoes settling toward him. With a side long leap, and ducking his head, he escaped this danger, and a moment after plunged into the thicket. To save his life, he could not have run the distance over again, and leaning against the trunk of a tree, he drew his revolver.

The passage that he had forced through the tangled mass of vines and bushes was the most available point for an entrance to his pursuers, who otherwise would have had to do as he had. One of the Mexicans entered, no doubt thinking that the scout had continued his flight; but he was speedily annihilated, for a pistol ball crashed through his brain. He fell forward, just in time to make way for another, who dropped across the corpse with a frightfully shattered jaw. By this time, Lone Star had recovered his strength sufficiently to resume his flight, and plunging into the swamp, in half an hour's time had completely thrown the lancers off the scent.

Then he sunk almost lifeless upon a little mound that rose above the mud and water. An hour rolled by, and he did not move. A *zopilote*—the black vulture of Texas and Mexico—after hovering over his form, swooped down and settled upon his shoulder. The disgusting stench restored him, and as he moved, the scavenger heavily flapped away and alighted upon a tree near by, as if loth to leave its intended victim.

Painfully cutting the stiffened clothes from the wound, he recoiled to his joy that it was a comparatively trifling one, although very painful, and bad to look at. The greatest injury was his excessive loss of blood. He knew that a few days' rest and quietness would set him all right again, and prevent any danger of fever setting in. The delay he deplored, for every minute was precious; but it could not be helped, and he was forced to submit with as good grace as possible.

We need not detail his life there, or how he managed to make his way back to the neighborhood of Goliad, or his grief at learning the disaster that had befallen the Texan cause. He found Gonzales burned to the ground, and proceeding unsuspected through the country, found that Mrs. Ives had abandoned her home. A week he hunted for them, and at last learned they were at San Felipe, where he found them.

He was met as one who had risen from the dead, and was shown the note written by Bright Eyes, that she had received a few days before, after she had given him up for dead. There was one sentence in it that startled him, and furnished a faint clue to the long delay of the youth. It burned itself upon his mind like letters of fire.

"Sister Montalvo, my rescuer, promises to have this delivered; he is a friend of Lone Star's, or at least has inquired after him particularly; and promises to conduct me to a place from whence I can return home without danger."

For a long time he pondered over it: where could that place be? Surely, not at his retreat near Jalapa? He could not tell. But perhaps his old foe was in Goliad, or at least he might learn something there; and an hour later he was disguised and ready to start, as soon as it grew dark enough, so that he could be far on his way before morning, and yet not be seen to leave the town. His heavy mustache was shaven off, and his lip dyed to the hue of the rest of his face.

Then with his long, flowing hair close-clipped, he appeared another man entirely, and one who had met him lately would never recognize him for the scout, Lone Star.

Three days afterward he was slowly riding through the streets of Goliad, trying to decide upon his farther course, when a couple of Mexicans crossed the street before him, the purple blanket worn by the nearest catching his eye. As he glanced up, his face lighted with a strange, deadly smile, for he had recognized his bitter foe, Crespino Montalado, the one-armed Jarocho.

Pulling his hat-brim down and shrouding the lower portion of his face with the folds of his purple *reata*, he slowly followed the *duo*, who appeared to be talking earnestly, and in a few moments they entered a *caf  *. Lone Star dismounted, and fastening his horse so that a slight wrench would free him in case a sudden departure should be necessary, he entered the room where the two Mexicans were seated at a table. Slipping a couple of bullets into his mouth, to change his voice, he called for a flask of wine and seated himself at the next table, but with his back toward the men he was drinking.

For a time they spoke in whispers, but as they proceeded, appeared to forget his presence, and then every word was distinguished by the scout. For some time he could not get the run of what they were discussing, but then he heard his own name pronounced by Montalado.

"*  rrai!* are you sure it was Lone Star?"

"Quite. He said he had a large band of Indian braves with him, and after cropping his ears, let him go, so that he could tell you who done it."

"Name of the devil! will I *ever* meet this cursed Texan?" gritted the Jarocho, to the great delight of the listener. "By you say that Martinez is dead—how was that?"

"Yes, '  n Anita shot him through the head. Goodness but 'twas a neat shot; she took him upon the run," exclaimed the Mexican, enthusiastically, and then he detailed the incident at length, but stumbled over the name.

"Yes, I know; Bright Eyes, he called himself. He saved our lives from some cursed rascals at Laredo."

Lone Star had heard enough, and deferring his own revenge, he left the tavern and safely emerged from the town. He did

not return to San Felipe—that would be just so much time lost, and time was of incalculable value just then. He knew not how soon the Jarocho would set out for home after receiving the message from there, and should he arrive first, the danger and difficulty of the task he had undertaken would be largely augmented.

Almost instinctively he struck into the most direct route for Remosa, where he knew there would be little danger in crossing the Rio Grande, his brain puzzling over the strange tale he had just heard. He could not solve the mystery of Bright Eyes' prolonged absence, or why he had taken the long journey apparently of his own free will, for the Mexican had spoken of him as a friend and guest, not as a prisoner.

The thought of Anita being the cause, he never for a moment suspected, as he knew that Mattie Foster was the promised bride of Bright Eyes. He had known love but for one woman, and thought all men were as correct upon that point as himself. Poor Lone Star! he had much yet to learn.

At length giving up all thought concerning the mystery, he wisely determined to wait until he should hear the solution from the youth, and pressed on as rapidly as was prudent, considering he had but one horse. For two days he met with no adventure, nor did he lay eyes upon a human being; but after noon upon the third, he distinguished a large body of horsemen directly in his path, not over a mile distant; and as his horse was too jaded to think of flight, he resolved to await their approach, and trust his good fortune to carry him through all safe.

In a few moments he saw they were Indians, and as they came whooping and yelling toward him, he made the panimimic signal for them to halt—elevating both hands with the palms toward them, and then moving them backward and forward several times. Seeing that they did not heed this—a certain sign that their intentions were hostile—and thinking he recognized the tribe, he made the motion signifying *Comanche*, by imitating the sinuous crawling of a serpent.

They halted on the instant, and as the scout advanced, a savage darted out to meet him, and in a moment more, Lone Star and the Spotted Hawk were embracing. Then as they rode along toward an *arroyo*, that the Comanches had lately

passed, Lone Star told the chief upon what mission he was bound, and after its being fully explained, the chief declared that he would join him in the quest, and although Lone Star had some doubts as to the prudence of this step, he could not refuse it without mortally offending his red-skinned brother.

The plan they finally settled upon was to disguise themselves as Indian *mansos*—a peculiar sort of Indians who are to be found in all parts of Mexico—which was easily carried out, by staining the skin of Lone Star with the juice of a certain plant, readily found in the vicinity. The chief removed his war-paint and head-dress, with any ornaments by which his tribe might be known; and in a couple of hours all was ready.

After giving his braves instructions to hover around the main trail, and to secure, at any cost, every one-armed man they might chance to see, and hold them prisoners until his return, but upon no account to injure them; and not to risk a fight with any large force, the two adventurers took their departure upon their novel "man-hunt."

CHAPTER X.

THE FANDANGO.

THE life led by Bright Eyes, after the death of Benito Martinez, was peaceful enough; yet he grew more gloomy and thoughtful, despite the care and solicitude shown by Anita, to cheer his mind and cause him to forget all but the present, and that he was so, is not to be wondered at. For his thoughts were full of his mother, and as he pictured her grief as perhaps she thought him dead, he feared he would go crazy; and yet the remedy seemed easy enough. He had but to return to her.

But that was not so simple, for twice had he stolen away, determined to leave the Jarocho village, never to return to it again, and both times he was followed by several well-armed men, who appeared to be dogging him; as in reality they were,

to prevent his escape before the chief came. He was sorely tempted to turn upon them, sword in hand, but then he remembered that at the first alarm, the entire band would rush to the scene, and perhaps, in such a case, he would be confined and all hopes of regaining his freedom, thus removed. So he bided his time, keeping in readiness to start at any moment.

Since he had found out that Anita was the sister of the man who had murdered the innocent family of Lone Star, his feelings toward her had somewhat moderated, and he began to realize the great injustice he had been guilty of, in not telling Anita his true condition, but allowing her to still believe that she was his only love. And yet, although he saw his true course plainly enough, he could not bring himself to follow it. He feared the result, for he now fully understood—or thought he did—the character and disposition of the Jarocho's sister, and knowing her fierce, passionate love for him, dreaded lest, when the truth was told her, she would kill herself. But he did not intend to leave her in ignorance. He had told the story plain enough, in a note that he would leave for her when he should be able to escape.

So the time passed on and great preparations were being made by both old and young to attend a *fan-lango* at Monatara, a little village some three or four miles distant, that was to be a holiday to all the peasants for miles around, it having been upon the *trif* for weeks. Anita had declared her intention of participating, partly, we fear, from a wish to display her handsome cavalier, and Bright Eyes could do no less than ask the honor of being her partner.

The long-anticipated day at length arrived; a lovely, delicious one, such as seem peculiar to that favored country, the warmth of which was tempered by the fresh, pleasant breeze from the seacoast. The Jarochos, male and female, had donned their best and most showy dress, and after an hour's ride the little cavalcade reached the village.

Monatara, like the Jarochos, had put on its holiday garb for the occasion, and an unusual stir was visible in the little hamlet. At the doors of the houses, women, old and homely, or young and temptingly fair, arrayed in an abundance of ~~muslin~~ muslin and lace, appeared from time to time, decked with

the gold and coral ornaments so dear to the somewhat dusky beauties of Mexico.

In a glade, an *estrade* or pavilion had been erected for the accommodation of the dancers; little shops and booths had been built for the supply of water and liquors, while here and there were scattered gambling-tables.

The Jarochos from the surrounding villages now began to flock in, who, after dismounting, tied their foaming steeds to the trunks of trees or the posts planted before the houses. Horses and men were soon mingled together in strange confusion; the cries of the latter, the wild neighing of the steeds, and the tuning of guitars were upon all sides. Circles were speedily formed around the gambling-tables, booths, or the inclosure arranged for the female dancers.

This spot, upon which the women alone were to figure, was elevated a few inches above the ground, and in accordance with a regular custom prevailing in all the villages around Vera Cruz, the men upon this occasion were to be mere spectators of the women's performance. A Jaracho squatted himself upon the ground, close to the *estrade*, and commenced a most villainous strumming upon his *mandolin*. Eight or ten girls answered to this call, and entered the circle.

They were much applauded, one of their number particularly so, the belle of the village, called 'ña Rosarita, who carried a glass of water upon her head without spilling a drop while dancing with the greatest vigor. When she paused, an exclamation of undisguised admiration burst from the lips of Bright Eyes, that showed Anita how very impossible her cavalier was, on the subject of beauty.

When this dance was finished the musician, reinforced by several others, struck up a new tune called *paterna*. This time the *estrade* was quite full, and the excitement among the spectators, increased by their frequent libations, became greater and more vociferous at every moment. But another and more intense interest was soon awakened in the minds of the crowd; and some of the more experienced ventured to predict that 'ña Rosarita would, before nightfall, "dance the *machete* and *chamirra* for two, at least, among them," and the events that followed explained this rather obscure allusion.

There appeared to be two Mexicans present who were rival

suitors for the dancer's hand. They were both surrounded by several friends or partisans, who appeared deeply interested in their principals' cause. One of the Jarochos advanced to the *estrade*, and uncovering, with a very gallant bow, presented ña Rosarita with his hat. This was received with a smile, but without interrupting the evolutions in which she was engaged.

The other suitor made a significant gesture to one of his adherents, who immediately advanced and did the same. The custom in such a case demanded that neither should receive the preference, so she continued to dance with the two hats still in her hand, while a pleased smile lit up her speaking features at the interest she was exciting, and the tribute paid to her charms; for well she knew how it all must end. The advantage of seeing his hat placed upon her head, belonged of right to the third gallant, and the other suitor promptly availed himself of this opportunity.

The crisis was fast drawing nigh, and Perico, the first man, with a glance of defiance at his rival formed his sash of China crape into a rosette, and entering the *estrade*, fastened it to the shoulder of Rosarita. The guitars now struck up a livelier tune and the voices of the singers increased in proportion. The men were exchanging looks of evident satisfaction, but the women were chattering together among themselves, plainly envious of the homage paid to the beautiful Rosarita.

Ramírez, as he was called, seized his *machete* and suspended it in the other shoulder of the dancer. It was a singular sight to behold the long, sharp, glittering blade dangling from the noble shoulder of the young girl in such close proximity to her heaving bosom; and thus the prophecy of her dancing the *chararra* and *machete* of her two suitors was fulfilled.

There was nothing now that could prevent a combat from taking place, and the preparations were being made, when the eager attention of Bright Eyes was disturbed by a light touch upon his shoulder. He turned quickly and saw close behind him the dark features of an Indian—or at least he thought so—who placed a finger upon his lips to denote silence, and then slipped a piece of bark into his hand. The exulting youth glanced at Anita, but she was absorbed by

the dance, and did not note the action. Then he read the words that were rudely scrawled upon the bark :

"Follow after. Be cautious. LONE STAR."

That was all, but he understood it now, and who the Indian was. As soon as he could command his features sufficiently, he turned to Anita and begged her to excuse him for a few minutes ; that he would be back soon. Then with a slight signal to the disguised scout he led the way clear of the crowd to a spot where they could converse without fear of interruption or being eavesdropped. A third person accompanied them, and as Bright Eyes glanced at him doubtfully, Lone Star said :

"That is all right ; he is one of us. My friend, Spotted Hawk, the Comanche chief. You have heard me speak of him often enough."

The Indian keenly scrutinized the youth for a moment, and then emphatically uttered, as he extended his hand :

"Good !"

"Well, youngster !" exclaimed the scout, as he eyed Bright Eyes a little doubtfully, "if you ain't just a little the queerest customer that I have run across for some time, then you may call me a Mexican ! Here we are, all a-grieving ourselves to death over you, thinking you killed, or a close prisoner, at least, and all that sort of thing, while here you are, rigged out like an overgrown monkey with an organ-grinder, in those flummydiddles, attending kick-ups, fandangoes, and goodness only knows what else ; with a trim little piece of human nature hanging upon your arm and acting toward you as only *one* person should be allowed to do, which ain't *her* by a long jump, but one Mattie Foster, as sweet a little angel as ever trod the footstool ; and—ah—h—!"

Here the worthy scout fairly broke down for want of breath, while the chief stood staring at him in open-mouthed wonder, as though he thought the usually reticent Lone Star had suddenly gone crazy, or turned into a squaw.

"But let me—" stammered the culprit, when he was interrupted by Lone Star, who resumed, with a snort :

"Don't tell me ! didn't I see it all ? How she lugged your arm and you worked at her little paw as though you were trying to milk a cow, you sinner you ? What if little

Rosebud had seen you? how would you have felt then, I should like to know? And I declare, when I saw you making a fool of that girl, who, I knock under, is hard to beat, I felt like throwing up the whole job, letting you stay here, and going back again and marrying Mattie myself; and blessed if I don't believe I'll do it yet. you great big hypocrite you!" spluttered the scout, shuffling rapidly from one foot to the other, like an overgrown turkey dancing upon a heated floor.

"Well say, old fellow, when you get your surplus steam blowed off, suppose you wake me up; it makes me sleepy," drawled Bright Eyes, as he squatted down upon the ground and began rolling up a husk cigarette, which he lighted and began puffing the smoke through his nostrils—and which, by the way, is the only scientific and *enjoyable* mode of smoking—watching the haze's wreath with as much *nonchalance* as though he was the most innocent creature imaginable.

"That's right, lad, and now let's talk business," rejoined Lone Star, changing his tone and appearance like magic. "I thought I would give you a little blowing up, as I knew you wouldn't get it at home, and from what I've seen to-day, I know you deserve it. What are you doing here, anyhow?"

And then the story was hastily sketched, upon both sides, although Bright Eyes suppressed all the love-making upon his part, thus showing that he was the innocent victim of some unknown cause, all of which Lone Star swallowed—with a very large grain of salt.

It was determined that the escape should be attempted at once, while the captors of Bright Eyes were engrossed by the fanango and its seductions. The horse ridden by the youth—a noble brute—could easily be secured, and once out of sight among the hills it would go hard but they could elude pursuit, if indeed any was made before the sports were over. But the note prepared by Bright Eyes must be delivered, or left where Anita would be sure to get it. Looking around them, a boy of twelve or fourteen years was seen, and they resolved to intrust it in his care. He was called up, and Bright Eyes said to him, speaking kindly, so as not to alarm him.

"Look yonder, boy, do you see that lady with the heavy gold chain twisted in her hair? the one with the lace mantilla, I mean."

"You mean 'ña Anita, the sister of the one-armed Montalado?" asked he.

"Exactly. Now do you wish to earn a handful of dollars, for a little service?"

"Thunder! yes,—if it is no harm meant to *her*," hesitated the boy. "If so, keep your money, and beware yourself. I'm but a *muchacho*, 'tis true, but my arm is strong and my hand steady enough to plant a knife between the ribs of any person who wishes to do the Doña an injury!" He fiercely added, keenly eying his interlocutor.

"Good! you'll do," laughed Bright Eyes. "All I ask you to do is just to hand her this note, when the sun touches yonder hilltop. Will you do it?"

"Will I not? and thank you into the bargain," and as he clutched the glittering coins in his brown hand, "Goodness! señor, but you pay like a king. No sooner than that, then?"

"On your life, no!" hastily exclaimed the Texan. "Not a moment, or instead of thanks from her, you may get a box on the ear," he cunningly added, seeing the lad's devotion and reverence for Anita.

"For one smile from her heavenly lips, I would walk through Hades barefooted!" vowed the lad, in a bombastic tone, but just as though he would gladly have attempted the task. "At the moment, she shall have it; never fear," and then he bounded away.

With one last glance at the maiden for whom he had prepared such a dreadful blow, the young Texan managed to lead his horse from the crowd, unnoticed, for the combat between the two rivals was now at its height, and joining his two friends, in a few minutes they were out of sight of the little hamlet, and then breaking into a swift gallop, many miles were placed behind them ere the sun set.

CHAPTER XI.

A SLIGHTED WOMAN'S REVENGE.

It was afternoon, and the three comrades had just crossed the Rio Grande at a point several miles above Remosa, where they halted to refresh their animals for the remainder of the day, as they were nearly knocked up by their long and rapid journey.

They were stretched upon the ground, each smoking his pipe and feeling dreamily contented, when suddenly Spotted Hawk uttered a guttural exclamation, and pointed across the river with the stem of his pipe. They followed the direction with their eyes, and saw a horseman shoot out from behind a clump of trees, and gallop toward the river.

That he was a Mexican, his garb proclaimed, and even at that distance they could see he was young and handsome. The trio watched him with considerable interest, and at the same time kept an eye upon the prairie beyond, as, if this was but one of a band, they must trust to the speed of their horses for safety.

The youth did not pause, but galloped to the brink and entered the water at the lower edge of the ford, not a little to the wonder of our friends, who well knew that unless he should head considerably up-stream, the swift current would wash him into the deeper water below, where it would be a desperate struggle for life; and even should the horse succeed in swimming across, help would be necessary to enable them to ascend the bank, which was steep, and rose straight from deep water.

Bright Eyes, as he saw this, arose and cautioned the Mexican, but whether he was understood, or otherwise, could not be told, as the reply was deadened by the roar of waters; but the stranger urged on his horse, and in a minute more was entirely submerged as the animal slipped from the ledge into the deep water. Then they rose, and the horse, swimming nobly, was guided with a steady hand to the opposite shore, where our friends stood.

But despite its almost fierce struggles, the beast was borne down-stream by the rapid current, nearly as fast as he approached the shore. Help was at hand, however, for the three men walked along the bank, and while shouting encouragement, prepared their lassoes in case they should be needed. As they came close to shore, Lone Star called out, in Spanish:

"Fasten the loop around your saddle-bow and we will draw you up."

"Yes, señor," was the reply, and as the scout cast his lasso its coils settled around the Mexican, who quickly drew the noose taut at the massive pommel.

Then the men pulled steadily upon the rope, thus assisting the noble horse to swim up-stream, and in a few minutes more he managed to strike bottom, and then scrambled up to the level prairie.

"Thousand thanks, gentlemen: a thousand thanks!" stammered the young Mexican. "I knew not the right path, and would have been drowned but for you."

"Who are you, anyhow?" hastily inquired Bright Eyes, as he keenly scrutinized the new-comer. "It seems to me that I have met you before, and if you had on—"

"Who knows? Are you a Mexican?" asked the youth, turning to the Texan and looking him full in the face with his large, dark eyes.

"Not quite so bad as that, though I don't wonder you think so, seeing my dress. But you—I could almost swear you were a woman whom I knew there!" slowly uttered Bright Eyes.

"Ha! ha! does the gentleman wish to make love to me—Don Leon Vincente Despillirro, at your service—for the girl he left behind him?" laughed the Mexican, with a slightly bitter cadence.

He was rather slight in figure, but remarkably well formed and richly dressed. His dark, olive face was very handsome, and only redeemed from effeminacy by a short, silky mustache and the flash of his large, jet-black eye. His hair was trimmed close, and but for these changes Bright Eyes would have seen that it was indeed Anita Montalvo who stood before him.

But his (as we must term her for the time being) *manchance* and the change in appearance, which with male attire made

Leon seem better, decided him, and turning away, Bright Eyes dropped down upon the grass and relighted his pipe. Lone Star, however, did not appear so easily satisfied. He closely questioned the new-comer, who told his story glibly enough.

While explaining this, they had all seated themselves. Then Lone Star spoke upon the subject of Bright Eyes' betrothal; of Mattie Foster, at the same time keenly, though covertly, watching Don Leon.

"When is the wedding to come off, lad, between you and Mattie?"

"Who knows? perhaps in a week, perhaps not until the war is over. I must do as she says," muttered Bright Eyes, half asleep.

"Well, but about this little *muchacha*—this Mexican girl that you have been making love to for the last month; what shall I tell Rosebud about her? I think she ought to know."

"Don't be a fool, Lone Star," pettishly exclaimed Bright Eyes; "you know how that was. I only acted as politeness demanded, and if she thought I was in earnest, no one is to blame but herself."

"Then you didn't love her?" persisted Lone Star, as he noted the sudden tremor that agitated the stranger's frame, and the steady, half-imploring glance that was turned upon the youth as he lay upon his back, with the broad straw *sombrero* placed over his face.

"How many times must I answer that? No, I tell you I did not love her, and—"

So far he went, but the sentence was never finished, for Anita Montalvo leaped beside him, and throwing off the hat, plunged a stiletto into his breast, as she hissed:

"You thought Anita Montalvo was a child, that you could win her love and then toss it aside like a broken toy? But the Jarocho's sister knows how to avenge herself!"

All was so unexpected and rapidly executed that not a hand was raised to prevent the deed until the end came. The blood-stained dagger was plucked from the wound, and then driven firmly home in her own swelling bosom. The hand did not falter, and the aim was true. As Lone Star sprang to his feet, the Jarocho's sister sunk down upon the bleeding

form of the young man whom she had loved so well, and with her last, dying breath, pressed her pallid lips to his.

She was dead. The steel had pierced her heart.

As the scout removed her from the youth's body, he saw that his suspicions were correct: that the disguised Mexican was indeed the girl that Bright Eyes had deceived and abandoned, as narrated. There could be no doubt. In vain he felt for a heart-throb; her blow had been but too sure.

"How is it, chief?" anxiously queried the agitated scout. "I it live er—?" he could not pronounce the word die in connection with the gay, winsome youth who had twined himself so closely around the seared heart of Alonzo Starr.

"The Wahcondah smiles, and does not hide his face. The man-squaw did not strike true, and the Yellow Hair will live," sententiously replied the chief, as he arose to his feet.

"Are you sure, chief, are you sure?" exclaimed the Texan, as he stooped over Bright Eyes.

"I have said. In two suns he can ride, if Spotted Hawk can find the Que-pa-lah-pa-nit to cool the hot sleep," replied the savage, who then strode away over the prairie to search for the herb named, a specific against fever caused by wounds.

In a short time the wounded man revived, and although very weak from pain and loss of blood, there was no real danger to be apprehended on that score. And when Spotted Hawk returned with his "medicine-plant," a poultice was prepared, and Bright Eyes soon sunk into a peaceful slumber. He knew nothing regarding the sad fate of the Jarocho's sister, as the body had been removed from his sight and he was too weak to ask questions.

But if there was no danger to be apprehended from the wound, there was from another source. They were at a ford often used by parties crossing the Rio Grande, and while there was no secure cover close by, the youth was not able to be removed. A very slight shock now would be fatal.

Should any band of Mexicans—and this section of Texas was entirely in their possession at this time—chance along, discovery would be inevitable and then there could be but one result.

After an earnest consultation, the chief departed in search of his followers, to whom he had given strict orders to remain in the vicinity of the ford. The hours rolled by, one by one, and the scout had enough to occupy his mind. Bright Eyes was a little troublesome, but that was not the worst.

His thoughts would revert to the poor, unfortunate victim whose form lay upon the greensward, covered over with a blanket. In vain he tried to avert them; his eyes would wander to the motionless form, and it appeared vividly to his mind's eye, despite the covering. The meaning of his fancies he could not translate, but it seemed to him as if the blow that had cut off her life, had in some measure touched his own.

And so passed wearily away the night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REVELATION.

THE sun was two hours high. Lone Star looked pale and haggard. The night just passed had been a fearful one to him, and had aged him years in looks. He had just renewed the poultice on Bright Eyes' wound, and the youth had dropped off in a light, uneasy slumber.

He was standing near the corpse of the Jarocho's sister, looking downward in a painful and inexplicable reverie, when, as if by instinct, he dropped to the ground, all his faculties as a scout being fully aroused. Afar off he could see a body of horsemen approaching, but whether friends or foes could only be surmised. The direction was favorable, and in a few moments the hope that it might prove Spotted Hawk and his band of Comanches, was confirmed. But this alone would not account for the strange glow that rested upon the scout's features—a glare of revenge and hate as he arose to his feet and slowly advanced to meet the party. In the front rank rode three men, whose attitudes showed they were prisoners, while their features and dress told of their being white men

and Mexicans. As he could see, now they were so near, all wore but one arm each. Was his enemy—Crespino Montalado, the Jarocho—among them? The main body halted, while the chief and his captives rode forward and paused before the scout.

“Let my brother look, and say if he sees what he has hunted for.”

The Texan glanced slowly around at the captives. Then his features lightened up as he saw that his prey was indeed before him, and he raised his hat to reveal his features, from which the disfiguring stain had been washed, as he slowly said :

“Look ; I am LONE STAR !”

But the Mexican's gaze did not waver, although the scout watched for such emotion. Then turning, he led the way to the spot where Bright Eyes lay. The Jarocho glanced curiously at the form of the wounded man, and then at the object concealed by the *serape*.

Lone Star looked up and saw this gaze.

“You know him?” but a little shrug was the Mexican's only reply.

“Bah ! have you lost your tongue as well as your arm that you can not answer? Come, let me show you something else. Perhaps you will speak then,” gritted Lone Star, as he led the horse that the captive still bestrode closer to the ghastly sight concealed beneath the *serape*.

“Mexican, you know me and I know you,” slowly uttered Lone Star. “We hate each other, and the world is not big enough for us both to live at the same time. Listen. You killed my family, all—every one.” The Jarocho only smiled. “My father, mother, two brothers, wife and child ; and for what? Bah ! we both know. But listen. Is there nothing but death that you dread? Is there no one whom you love—whose love is twined around your heart?”

As he spoke these words in a significant tone, he kept his eye fixed upon the Jarocho's face, and the convulsive tremor that ran over the prisoner's frame, slight as it was, did not elude Lone Star's eyes as the Mexican looked inquiringly toward him.

“There is some one, then, for whom you would feel sor-

row. A wife, perhaps, or a child; or is it a *sister*?" he hissed, in fierce joy, as the Jarocho started again.

"I do not understand you," dropped slowly from the captive's lips.

"Look, then!" hissed Lone Star, as he cast aside the blanket that covered the corpse.

"Mother of God! it is my sister!" faltered the Mexican, as he gazed upon the loved features, now cold and still in death.

"Yes, 'tis your sister!" cried the avenger, exultantly. "See! I am more generous than you. You made me live long years in solitude, so that I might feel your revenge the more deeply. But I have too great an affection—ha! ha!—for you, and before the sun is an hour older, you will be as she is."

The Jarocho looked up, and tossing back the long hair that had fallen over his face, with a strange, sneering look in his black eye, he asked:

"Was it *your* hand that done this—did she die by *your* knife?"

"Am I a Mexican? do you think there are two Crespino Montalados?"

"I am sorry—very sorry; for I hoped you had slain her. Then I could have died easy, for I would have been bitterly avenged. Ha! ha! 'twould have been such joy—such exquisite revenge, to know that a *father had slain his own child*! Even now I can triumph over you, cursed Texan!" and a wild, half-crazed glare shone in the eyes of the one-armed Jarocho.

"Father—child—are you crazy? Is not that your sister?"

"You think so—*she* thought so; and I learned her to hate and curse the name of Alonzo Starr, who had mutilated her *brother*," ferociously laughed Montalado. "And do you know why? For *revenge*. Ah, it was like music—like the singing of angels, to hear a *child cursing her own father*!"

"Are you mad—do you know what you are saying? What is this to me?"

"And is it nothing that a daughter—that *your* child should curse you, and pray to the holy Virgin that my hand should drink your heart's blood?" sneered the Jarocho.

"My child—*can* it—" faltered Lone Star; then leaping

upon the prisoner, he clutched him with an iron grip by the throat, growling like a wild beast. "Unsay your words—tell me that you lie, or by the living God, I'll kill you by inches!"

The Jarocho gave signs of strangulation, and this recalled the scout to his senses, for he did not intend that death should come so easily. After the Mexican regained his senses, the scout asked, in a calm, quiet tone, that surprised his hearer:

"And now tell me what you meant by your words a while since."

"I will, as it will doubtless please you, and for that I would do any thing," sneered the Mexican. "As truly as the sun shines—as I believe in the Blessed Virgin, just so true is it that she who lies yonder, is your child—yours and Joaquín Lateran's."

"What proof have you?" asked Lone Star, his white face betraying no emotion.

"The cross that her mother used to wear was around the child's neck. I have it here. When we killed the res, I took her, your child, with me. Why, I do not know. Perhaps I meant to kill it, but as she grew older I learned to love her, for the woman who had chosen you before me. And now—there she is. Believe me or not; why should I care?"

Lone Star did not answer, but approached the chief, and said:

"My brother, will you do a favor for me?"

"Spotted Hawk hears," laconically replied the chief.

"That man is my enemy, and he must die. I could kill him, but that is not enough. He must suffer the fire torture. Will your braves do this, for me?"

"Good! it shall be done," exclaimed the chief, and he pronounced the request to his warriors, who hailed the tidings with a wild, exultant yell of joy, for this was a practice that Spotted Hawk had ever denounced and denied them, heretofore.

The Jarocho heard the yell with a quiet sneer, and a half-derisive smile curled his lip. He knew that death was inevitable, and had schooled his mind to expect nothing else, determined to show his foes that he knew how to die. But he

was bitterly disappointed at the calm manner in which the scout bore the revelation he had just made.

He little knew what fearful grief was concealed beneath that unmoved mask, or how the father's heart bled within him. For Lone Star did not doubt the assertion of the one-armed Jarocho. He felt fully convinced that the dead form yonder was that of his child, whom he had thought murdered long since, and consumed in the burning dwelling. Not for a moment had he dreamed of the truth. But now he could interpret the strange sensation that he had experienced during his midnight vigil by the side of his wounded comrade and the cold form of her he had thought the Jarocho's sister.

After a short consultation with the chief, the father took up his dead and carried it to a little group of *algarobias*, where he dug a grave. He would accept of no help, and from that the Jarocho knew that his story was believed.

But we will not dwell longer.

On the next day the cavalcade set out, as then Bright Eyes was able to bear removal in a horse-litter, and after a short journey halted for the night beside a clear stream. Then the savages departed, taking with them the three prisoners. When they returned, near morning, they were alone. The unfortunate Mexicans *had been left behind*.

When the two Texans were in comparative safety, the Comanche chief bade them good-by, and departed, followed by his braves. Bright Eyes was now able to sit upon his horse, and after a few trifling adventures they succeeded in finding the widow Ives and Mattie Foster. The meeting must be left to the reader's imagination, and we will only add that a month after, Mattie Foster became Mrs. Dwight Ives, and so far as we know, has had no particular cause to regret the change. Bright Eyes told her frankly and without reservation the truth regarding himself and the unfortunate girl who to the last believed herself to be the Jarocho's sister; and she absolved him of all sin.

As for Lone Star, little need be said. He plunged into the thickest of the danger, and although he sought death upon a hundred battle-fields, it avoided him. He seemed to bear a charmed life. At the close of the war between Mexico and the United States he joined Spotted Hawk's band of Co-

manches, so that he might still smite the accursed race he hated so bitterly. How he died, or whether he yet lives, is not known to us.

From the time of Bright Eyes' return home, the family never saw Lone Star again. He had severed every tie that bound him to his own race, and became an Ishmaelite, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him."

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The new school. For two males and one female.

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